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THE QUEEN'S LAND;

OR,

ARD AL MALAKAT.

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BY

VERNEY LOVETT CAMERON, C.B., D.C.L.,

COMMANDER ROYAL NAVY,

Author of "Across Africa," "Our Future Highway," etc.

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CHAPTER I.

FOUR years ago I arrived at Aden, in the yacht of my old friend Walter Trevelyan, on our way home, after having visited India, Japan, and China, and here we had to stay a few days in order to make good some defects in the engine room; and we had to amuse ourselves as best we might in exploring this ancient volcano, which is now so important as a coaling station on our road to the East, which, hated by most, has fascinations for a few, and notably for one P. and O. agent, who requested to remain at Aden, instead of being transferred to Australia, as "Aden was so much more lively."

Cain's monument at the cantonments, a climb to the signal station on the summit of the peak, where we consumed bottled beer, provided for a payment by the sergeant signaller, with infinite zest, an examination of the tanks, a ride across the isthmus; these, and the hospitality of the officers of the garrison, helped to pass away the time. And then the repairs taking longer than was anticipated, after we had spent money on curios at Cowasji Dinshaw's shop-hotel, we thought one morning

we would visit the quarters of the Jews who came on board all mail-steamers and ships arriving at Steamer Point to sell ostrich feathers, to see if we could not by hunting about find better feathers at less exorbitant prices than are usually charged by these Israelites.

Landing from the *Gulnare,* as the yacht was called, we found at the post office bunder a carriage and pair, driven as usual by a Somâli boy with a whitewashed head; and telling him to drive up to camp to the Jews' lines, he soon passed the Steamer Point shops and so called hotels, and then passing the French coaling-station, through the guard at the pass, came into the cantonments. The Jews at home we found were no more inviting than they had appeared when they pestered us to buy their feathers on board the *Gulnare;* but a few words of Hebrew which I used seemed to excite their curiosity very much, and at last I was asked by some of them to come and see their Rabbi, a very old man, who would be glad to speak with a Gentile who knew Hebrew, and who, according to those who pressed me to visit him, would be able to tell us many wonderful things about the history of Aden.

I was willing to go, but Trevelyan said: "Why, Murray, you will never be able to understand the old man, and I cannot stand these confounded close huts any longer. I think we have feathers enough to stuff a bed; and what with dust, dirt, and smells, I shall faint if I do not get a brandy and soda."

"All right, Trevelyan; if I really wish to see the old Rabbi I can come another day without you." We soon found ourselves sitting outside a Parsee's shop, each with a long tumbler in our hands, full of iced brandy and soda. Whilst we were here some of the garrison came

and sat down with us, and in the course of conversation we mentioned that the Jews had wished me to visit their Rabbi. I was told that I should certainly accept the invitation, as he would rarely allow any European to visit him; and he was generally reputed to be a most marvellous old man, and as some of the Jews said "as full of learning as an egg is full of meat." I accordingly sent to say that I would come to visit the old Rabbi the next day, but Trevelyan would not accompany me. "No, Jock," he said; "not if the old man were to show me King Solomon and the queen of Sheba, would I again endure the smells and the bites I have to-day. If you go, Jock Murray, you must go alone."

We accepted the invitation of the officers who were talking to us to dine with them, and it was not until late that we got into our gharry to go to Steamer Point to get on board the *Gulnare*. Next morning at breakfast I endeavoured to persuade Trevelyan to come with me to visit the Rabbi, but he steadfastly refused, and said he intended instead to take one of his boats out sailing in the bay, and get a good blow clear of coal dust, of which he said three-fourths of the air one breathed at Steamer Point was composed.

As I could not alter his determination, I went ashore, and drove up to the Jews' lines myself, and after some little waiting was ushered into the presence of the old Rabbi.

He was seated on a low divan in a small room, which had every ray of daylight excluded, and was but dimly lighted by a small lamp burning sandalwood, or some other scented oil. His beard was of a snowy whiteness and full and ample, whilst his dark and piercing eyes shone like coals under his cavernous brows, and his

face was so curiously seamed and wrinkled that it seemed scarcely human.

On my entrance he seemed to me to be seated, and then commenced to speak to me in Hebrew. For long, much that he said was dull and uninteresting, and related principally to the ancient glories of Aden, which at one time he said had been a very garden, and where he and his fellows, instead of being despised outcasts, were once honoured and feared. At last I, to change the subject, asked him if he had ever travelled in Arabia or Africa. This seemed to strike upon a new chord, for he became quite excited, and spoke of visits that he had made to Jerusalem and Damascus, and how he had in his youth traded with the Somâlis, and even once made a voyage as far as Makdishu and Marka to trade with Arabs there; and then he said he had gone a long distance into the interior, indeed until his progress had been stopped by men who said they were the guards of a queen who reigned over a large country, and who would permit no strangers within its borders.

He said that he inquired about this queen from his Arab companions, and they told him that she was a great and powerful monarch, and that some of their number, who had been taken prisoners for trespassing on her territory, reported that her subjects were clothed, and not naked like savages; that instead of being black, they were light-coloured, and that they understood how to read and write, and worshipped in buildings like mosques, some of which, as well as some of the houses that they had seen, were very handsome.

This story of a civilized but unknown kingdom in Africa seemed very curious to me; but still I remembered that, even before Burton's discovery of the Tan-

ganyika, and his sending Speke to the Victoria Nyanza, there had been vague stories and rumours of a people to the south of Abyssinia who were supposed to be more civilized than their neighbours, and even by some were reported to be Christians, and perchance the subjects of the true Prester John.

I asked the Rabbi if since that time he had heard anything more of this wonderful kingdom, and he said that he knew merchants of Marka who sometimes came to Aden, and that they always insisted that the kingdom existed, and the same stringency was still observed in excluding all strangers from its borders; but that at certain points trade was carried on by the Arab merchants placing the goods in a cave in a rock and retiring for a time. On returning, they found ostrich feathers, gums, ivory, and gold, placed by their goods. If they considered that these were sufficient to pay for the merchandise they had left, they took them away; but if they were not satisfied they made marks on the ground against the things for which they wished more payment, and again retired, and on returning they sometimes found that their demands had been complied with, and sometimes not. If they were still dissatisfied, they took away their own goods; but if on the contrary they accepted the price, they brought away the articles left in barter, and left their merchandise behind.

I asked if this curious sort of trade was always carried on honestly and without loss, and was told that usually it was, but that a half caste Arab had been tempted by the things being apparently unguarded, and had tried to take away both the goods he had brought to sell and their price. He and his people had only got a very small distance on their road towards Marka, when they were

overtaken by a body of horsemen, and nearly all killed or taken prisoners. The chief offender himself was found wandering about with his tongue plucked out, and his hands cut off, but no one had been able to gather from him where he had been or what he had seen.

I felt much interest in this new and strange country; and having been long bitten with a desire for exploring unknown regions, I began instantly to try and see if I could compass any way of visiting it, and was just going to ask the Rabbi if any Marka or Makdishu merchants were in Aden or likely to be there soon, when I was interrupted by Trevelyan coming in and insisting on my coming and taking part in a game of polo on the isthmus. I had to give in to his insistence, and promising the Rabbi to come and see him again the next day, I soon changed my clothes and formed one of a team which Trevelyan had got together to do battle against the polo-players of the 82nd regiment, which was then the European regiment stationed at Aden.

Our men had never played together, and were mounted on horses and ponies of which they knew nothing; but still the brilliant play of Trevelyan did marvels for us, and we were able to make a better fight than might have been expected under the circumstances.

In the evening, our opponents dined on board the *Gulnare*, and after dinner our conversation turned on the visit I had made to the Rabbi in the morning, and I mentioned what he had said about this mysterious queen-governed country. As to the truth of the Rabbi's story, opinion seemed to vary very much: some said that the whole story was nonsense and a pack of rubbish; whilst others were inclined to give a certain amount of credence to what I had been told, and urged that there was

always some new thing coming out of Africa, when I said I thought I should like to go and see what the country was like. However, there was no lack of unanimity, for one and all declared that in the first place I would surely be killed by the Marka Arabs; and in the second place, that if I got to the country there would be no chance of my coming back; and in the third place, that if I did come back it would be without hands or tongue, like the dishonest Arab of whom I had been told.

Argument was totally unavailing to prove that there could be any possibility of success in visiting the mysterious queen; and I was so put on my mettle by the declarations that were made that I could never succeed, that what had in the morning been a mere idea was now a fixed purpose; and when I turned in, it was with the full determination of proceeding to Marka, in order to make my way into this civilized though unknown African country.

In the morning, I told Trevelyan that my mind was fully made up, and that I would quit the *Gulnare* at Aden, and make my way to Marka in some native craft. He tried all he could to dissuade me, and urged that at all events it would be a wise thing for me to return to England, in order to procure a proper outfit. I promised him that I would consider this, and then going ashore again, went to the Rabbi to try and find if I could learn anything more from him.

Fortunately for my project, when I arrived at his house I found there an Arab, who was a native of Brava, a short distance to the south of Marka, on the coast of Africa, and he said that he had a dhow in the harbour with which in a few days he was going to set sail for his own

home; and he, when he heard what I wanted to do, said he would take me to Marka willingly enough, and that he could guarantee my being well treated there; but that as to reaching the queen's country, that, he said, was quite another question, as, though he had often heard of it, he had never seen or met any one who had been there; and that the Marka people did not, he thought, now carry on any direct trade with it, even in the manner described by the Rabbi, but that tribes lying between the coast and Marka now did some of the trade, but that the major portion went by the Jub River to Barderah, the sultan of which place would not permit any one to pass his territory, and that some years before he had killed a white man and all his people who had tried to get by in a steamer.

This did not seem very hopeful, but the Rabbi said he was sure I should find some people at Marka who would be able to assist me, and that if I chose to run the risk he would give me letters to the men he had known when there in his younger days, and they or their sons would certainly help me in every way they could; and in the meantime he advised me to take the opportunity offered me by the Nakhoda Nassib, and go in his dhow to Marka.

I instantly closed with Nassib, and he promised for two hundred dollars to land me and any followers or stores I might wish to take, and which could be stowed under the poop of his craft, at Marka, and also not to sail for a period of ten days. When I came back from the cantonments down to Steamer Point I found that a man-of-war had just arrived, and she proved to be the *Albatross*, a cruiser from the East Coast, where she had been engaged in the suppression of the slave-trade, and

she had, as I could see on my way on board the *Gulnare*, a number of slaves on board.

In the evening, after dinner, we met some of the officers of the *Albatross* on shore, and I, being full of my project, asked them if they could tell me anything about Marka and its inhabitants. What they could say was but little, yet they all insisted that it was dangerous at any time to go to Marka and Makdishu, the more so just now, as four slave dhows had put in at Marka owing to the S.W. monsoon having ceased sooner than usual, and the *Albatross* had taken them all, and about a hundred and fifty slaves, which had not been landed before they arrived. But they said their Zanzibar interpreter, Juma, would be able to tell me more than any one.

I asked if they would let me see him, and they at once complied, and sent on board to fetch him; and just as the messenger was starting one of them sang out to him: "And tell Juma to bring that rum fellow that none of us can make out among the slaves; perhaps he belongs to the mysterious country."

In a very short time Juma, a portly Msuahili, who for many years had served as interpreter in Her Majesty's cruisers, came ashore to us, and brought with him the slave that no one could make out, who was a man of about five and thirty, whose features were the most handsome that I think I had ever seen, and who was of a golden bronze colour. Juma, on being told that I wanted to go to Marka, at first said: "All Marka man's plenty bad and all coast plenty bad. *St. Abb's* men, *Penguin* boat, all go there and make kill or slave." This I found referred to the loss of the *St. Abb's* some years previously, some of her crew having been reported to have escaped to the mainland, and to have been taken into the

interior, and that from time to time rumours had been circulated that some were still alive; and to the *Penguin* in about 1864 having lost a boat and her crew on the coast, the whole of the crew having been killed by the natives.

After a time however Juma became more sensible, and said that if I was careful, and made Nakhoda Nassib promise to make good terms for me at Marka, I could land then without danger, and that I could rely on any promise the Arabs made me being faithfully kept; but that as to my getting into the interior, and above all coming back again, he felt very doubtful whether I should be able to do anything. I asked what the slave was whom he had brought on shore with him, and he said he was a Galla; but though he knew he was a Galla, still there was something about him which he could not understand, and, as he did not know the Galla language, he could not get any information from the man.

I asked Juma if he thought it probable that there would be any one at Aden who would be able to talk to the slave; and he said that it was not improbable that among the freed slaves, or the crews of the dhows which were engaged in the trade with the East Coast, some one might be found, and he promised to look about in the morning and see if he could obtain a man who could interpret for me.

CHAPTER II.

THE captain and one of the lieutenants of the *Albatross* dined on board the *Gulnare* with Trevelyan and me, and when they found that I was determined to try and penetrate inland from Marka, they gave up dissuading me from my project, and said that they would assist in every way in preparing my outfit. Trevelyan also said that, though he thought it was a harebrained undertaking, he would at all events see me safe as far as Marka, and take me there in the *Gulnare*. But Captain Martin, of the *Albatross*, said that the people of Marka would most probably take the yacht for a man-of-war, and think we came to suppress the slave-trade, and that the best thing that I could do was to keep to my intention of going there in a dhow. They said I could not start at a better time, for the N.E. monsoon had set in; and that if Trevelyan wanted to help me, he could not do better than tow Nassib's dhow as far as Gardafui; and this he promised to do.

I was rather at a nonplus for arms and instruments, having only on board the *Gulnare* a double-barrelled fowlingpiece; but here again I found both Trevelyan and my new friends willing to assist me, as Trevelyan said he would give me twenty snider rifles belonging to the yacht, and Thomson, the lieutenant of the *Albatross*, said that he could let me have a heavy rifle and a fowling-piece if I would write to England to have others to replace them sent to Bombay, to which place his ship

was bound. I was anxious to find out if I could get tents and camp furniture, and after a bit, as we thought that any Indian tent which might be bought at Aden would be very cumbersome and heavy, it was arranged that the sailmakers of the *Albatross* should make me one, and that her artificers, with such assistance as could be given them on board the *Gulnare*, would prepare my camp furniture. At last, after much talk, we separated for the night, and I went to bed to dream of the mysterious countries I intended to visit.

Early in the morning I was awoke by the steward coming to me and saying that the interpreter of the *Albatross* and two other men were on deck and wished to see me. Hastily dressing, I went up to see them, and found that Juma was accompanied by Nassib, who he said could talk Galla, and the Galla slave, whose name I was told was Aïto.

Aïto, it turned out, had been taken prisoner in war, and had been brought down to the Jub River, where he was sold as a slave, and was the only survivor of five others who had been captured with him. At first he would say but little, as he was evidently much disgusted an Orma, or strong man, as the Gallas called themselves, should be a slave. But when he was told that if he would give me information about his country, and promise to serve me faithfully, he should accompany me on a journey which would lead near to his home, and enable him to rejoin his own people, he became more communicative, though he said that an Orma could never serve any man, but that he would be a friend to me, and do everything that a friend could. With this I was perfectly satisfied, and he told me that the stories I had heard from the old Rabbi about a country ruled over by a queen were true;

but that its inhabitants would have no communication with the peoples surrounding them, and that all that he knew had been gathered from slaves who had escaped from among them.

In this country the people, he said, lived in houses built of stone, and there were many large towns, and there were numbers of horses, cattle, and sheep, and both men and women dressed in long and flowing robes, and that the warriors went to battle on horses, and wore shirts made of iron and copper.

All this added to my desire to visit this unknown country, and I thought that I would pay another visit to the old Rabbi, and find out if I could from him what would be the best goods to take with me, and also whether he or his people still kept up commercial relations with the Arabs of Marka, and if in that case he could give me letters to them, which would insure me a good reception, and in case of my running short of stores or money enable me to get anything from them. With this intention I landed, and was going to hire a gharry to go to the cantonments, when an Englishman of two or three and thirty, dressed all in white, with a red pugaree round his helmet, stopped me and asked if my name was not Murray.

"Yes," I said, "I'm Murray; what do you want with me?"

"Why," he said, "I have heard that you are intending to do some exploring work, and I should much like to go with you. My name's Tom Hardy, and I'm wing officer of the third Bombay Light Cavalry, and have the command of the detachment here. My relief comes here by the next mail from Bombay, and I was then going to England on long leave; but I would much sooner have a

trip into the interior of Africa. And if, as I hear, you are going to start from Marka, you will have a new bit of country before you, and a stiff piece of work, and a second man to help you will not come amiss."

"Why," said I, "I can scarcely answer such a question off hand; but jump into this gharry, I'm going up to the Jews' lines to see the old Rabbi again, whose conversation first put the idea into my head, to ask him some questions, and we can talk on the way up."

My new companion, who was a strapping fellow of nearly six feet in height, told me that he had no near relations, and that as regarded the cost of the trip he would be perfectly able to pay his share, as he was well off. And he could also plot the route we took and make the maps, and he urged me so strongly to accept his offer, that by the time we got up to the cantonments I was strongly inclined to do so, and said that I would give him an answer the next day.

He left me outside the Jews' lines, and I went in and found the old Rabbi even more inclined to be communicative than he was before; and he said that since I had seen him he had thought of the days when he had been to Marka, and of the country ruled over by the queen, and said he remembered that her guards were, as Aïto had told me, dressed in shirts of mail, and were also armed with swords and spears, and that they were attended by footmen, some of whom were armed with slings and some with bows and arrows, and who carried huge shields.

I asked him if he could tell me nothing more about these people, and what the Arabs who had been prisoners among them had told him; when he said that the time was so far distant that he could not recollect much, but

that the Arabs certainly had told him that there were large towns, and that the people could write and read, but that instead of paper they used leather and the inner bark of trees. Some of the towns were very large and surrounded by high walls. The nearest large town to the frontier was supposed to be about seven days' march distant from it, but what these towns were like he did not know. He urged me not to attempt to visit this country, as I should be sure to be made a prisoner, and would most probably be never able to get away, even if I were not killed.

I said I had made up my mind to go, and that nothing that he could say would deter me, and that therefore I only wished to know how far he could assist me in getting to the country, and when I was there I would trust to my good fortune for getting away again, as if I were successful in visiting such an extraordinary country it would amply repay me for any risk I might have to run.

At last the old man ceased to dissuade me, and he said that, as I was determined on going, he would teach me the use of the numbers 7, 13, and 19, which would give me power and knowledge, but which I was to withhold from all other people, and only to use in circumstances of imminent necessity and great danger and peril. I wondered at his doing this, but he said that as he had never before met or heard of an Englishman who knew anything of Hebrew, he thought I was a proper person to whom to impart the power given by the knowledge of the mystery of these numbers; and I carefully took down what he said about them, though I had not the slightest belief in what he averred were the properties of the various combinations that he told me

of, but I thought that he would be more likely to be friendly to me if I feigned a belief, and tell me more about the people of Marka and the country behind than if I refused to listen to him.

In this I was not disappointed, and he gave me letters to Sheikh Nassur, who, he said, was the principal man among the Arab inhabitants of Marka, and to one Fieruz, a Msuahili living there, with whom he kept up trading relations. The people of Marka, I learnt, were most strict and fanatical Mohammedans, and that though he thought that these letters would be sufficient to prevent me being illtreated by them, he said it would be better for me, if possible, also to get a circular letter from a Moslem Santon who was then in Aden, which would insure me a warm welcome and assistance in my projects.

Behind Marka, he said, I should, after passing through some Somâlis, come among the Gallas, some of whom were Mohammedans and some heathens, and were a fierce and warlike people, in my dealings with whom I should have to be on my guard, and be very careful not to go counter to any of their prejudices or beliefs, and while not giving offence, use all means in my power to maintain an influence over them, and claim to be a superior being.

I also made arrangements with him to honour any drafts I might have occasion to make during my travels, and promised that they should be paid on demand by Cowasji Dinshaw, who thoroughly understood European methods of banking; and, after a long conversation, was about to take my leave, when the Rabbi said he had one request to make of me, and that was that there had been at all times among the Jews in Aden a tradition

that a portion of their number had hundreds of years before penetrated to this or some similar country, and that though detained, they had been well treated; and from time to time rumours had come, no one knew from where, that their descendants were still alive, and that they still possessed the copies of the tables of the law and of vessels of the temple which the travellers, as was the custom when they started, carried with them, and that all others had now been lost, much to the grief of Jews of all nations, and he now, if I were successful in reaching the queen's country, wished me to find out if any of these Jews lived there, or if there were any truth in these rumours.

To this I readily assented, and the old Rabbi said that for my having made this promise he would give me the most valuable possession he had, and opening a chest which stood by the cushions on which we were seated took from it a small case of silver ornamented with uncut emeralds and fastened to a strong steel chain. This he hung round my neck, and warned me that I should never on any account part with it, but that when I found myself in a position of peril and danger from which there seemed no escape, I might open it, and by means of what I should then see I would find a way out of my difficulties.

I thanked him for his gift, and solemnly promised that I would never open it except under the conditions he named, and then, taking my leave of him, I went to look for Hardy, whom I found walking about near the tanks in conversation with an Arab, who he said had come to ask him to take him with him, and he had some thoughts of doing it, as the man had promised to swear on the Koran to be faithful. I said that that was

all very well, but that first of all I had to make up my mind as to whether Hardy should come with me himself, for I knew nothing about him except what he had told me, and in such a journey as I proposed it would be far worse to have a companion who was not in perfect accord with one than none at all.

Hardy said that he quite agreed with me, and that he would refer me to his messmates and friends in the garrison for his character, which he thought would be satisfactory, and he said: "I must urge you to let me go, for I cannot help believing that some of those who were lost in the *St. Abbs* are yet alive, and my brother, my only brother, was among them, and as he was young and strong he may be yet living; and then I know Arabic well, and have often helped the assistant-commissioner in his dealings with the Arabs; and they are friendly with me and will, no doubt, give us writings to the people of Marka to treat us well. I do not think you can do better than take me with you."

I was much taken with the looks and manners of Hardy, and inwardly determined to take him; but answered that I must have some time to consider, and that I would adhere to the promise I had given him, and let him know my decision the next day.

With this he was satisfied, and as I said I was going back on board the yacht, he proposed to go and see some of his friends, whom he would bring to see me in the evening at Cowasji Dinshaw's, and that they would speak as to his temper and capabilities.

When I got on board the *Gulnare* I told Trevelyan what I had been doing, and he said he was very glad to hear that I was likely to have a companion; for though he considered my intended journey mad and foolhardy,

still he thought that with a trustworthy friend I should be much more likely to succeed than if I went alone. We soon after went on board the *Albatross*, and found that the tent and other things which had been taken in hand on board were being pushed on with all speed, and that Aïto had selected from among the slaves twelve men, Gallas, whom he said would be useful to us in our journey, and that all they asked was that they might be set free when they arrived in the neighbourhood of their own country. I gladly accepted their offers, and then Captain Martin proposed that we should call with him on the resident, to which we gladly assented.

At the residency I found that they were much exercised as to whether it were right to allow me to go, as General Farquhar, the resident, considered the undertaking a most dangerous and risky one. I answered that my mind was set on the undertaking, and that if I did not start from Aden I would from somewhere else, and that I hoped he would not put any difficulties in my way.

The general smiled, and said, "He that will to Cupar maun to Cupar," and that it was no use arguing with a man who had made his mind up. "All I can do now," he continued, "that I have cleared my mind by warning you, is to give you what assistance I can, and if you will go with my aide-de-camp, Captain Stevens, he will show you some pieces of hides which have been brought from the coast, on which are some letters or writing, which we think must have been scratched on them by some of the survivors of the *St. Abbs*."

Captain Stevens took me into the office, and opening a cupboard brought out three bullocks' hides, on which were several marks, and which certainly looked as if they had been intended for letters. On one there was evidently a

line of what had been writing, but it had been so much injured by weather and insects that one could scarcely make anything of it, and it was not till after considerable difficulty that I made out an S and an A, and then farther along I came to a capital H, and after a few indistinct marks what I took for the tail of a Y, and then after much trouble I deciphered an 1865.

I looked up to Captain Stevens and said, "Do you know Mr. Hardy?"

"Yes; why, of course I know him well; he lost his only brother in the *St. Abbs.*"

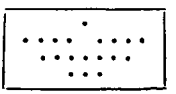
"Well," I said, "this was written by his brother; has he seen it?"

"No; these things were here before he came to Aden, and I supposed that he had given up all hopes—he never made any inquiries."

"Why, he says he believes his brother may be still alive, and wishes to go with me in the hope of finding him."

"You don't say so. I should say you could not have a better fellow than he is, and he is a good sportsman, and a wonderful shot. But here," said Stevens, "are some smaller pieces of hide, and on them are some clearer marks. These came here in '78, and we have been trying to find out if there is any clue to where they came from. The general and the other residents here before him have thought it best to keep this as quiet as possible, for fear of exciting false hopes among the relations of any possible survivors of the *St. Abbs,* but letters have been sent to Makdishu, Marka, Brava, and the Jub River, to offer £500 for each Englishman who may be detained up country, and we have never had any result from the offer."

"Let me have a look at these." And I took up the pieces, which were about two feet long by six inches wide, and on one, after much close examination, amid a quantity of marks which seemed to be designed for some ornament, I found constantly recurring strokes, which formed H, S, and A, and at last I made out several series of dots, which were disposed as follows, in squares round the edges, so as to form a sort of border. Seeing that the numbers were always the same, I puzzled over them for a long time, and at last I said: "I have it. The top dot is a thousand, the second hundreds, the third tens, and the last units, and the whole make 1873. Hardy's brother was alive in '73. Now let me see another strip."



On this again I found H, S, and A worked into the middle part of the pattern, and the dots, which were arranged in a similar manner, gave 1875; and the third strip, of which a part of the surface had been scraped, showed dots for 1876 on the border.

"Why," said I, "Hardy's brother must have been alive in '76; and as he had lived for twenty-two years there can be no reason why he should not have lived for another eight, and be alive now."

"No," said Stevens. "It is curious, though; we have often pored over those bits of hide, and wondered what they meant, and here you find a key the first time they are put in your hands. We had better tell the general, and he will send for Hardy to come here."

CHAPTER III.

We found the general with Trevelyan and Captain Martin sitting under the verandah, trying to get the full benefit of the sea breeze, and when we communicated our discovery, the general sent at once for Hardy, and told me that he would if he had thought there was so much on the small pieces as I had already made out, have certainly taken energetic steps long before this to have a search made for the survivors of the shipwreck of the *St. Abbs*, but that he had always supposed what I now said were the letters H, S, and A, to be merely chance markings, and as for the dots, he had never examined them particularly.

Hardy was with us within half an hour, and the question of his going with me was at once decided. Telegrams were sent to England and Bombay asking for assistance, but the answers that came back were the usual stereotyped ones,—"Wish all success, but accept no responsibility." But in the meantime Hardy asked if he might have the hides and small pieces to see if he could make anything more out of them, saying: "My brother is the only relation I have in the world, and though I can scarcely remember him, I will find him and bring him home again if he be still alive. My mother always said he was not dead, and her last words to me were that Hugh was still alive, and she was sure that some day he would be found."

The general offered to let us have anything from the

Government stores which we might require, and before I left the residency that night, having accepted an invitation to dine there, I think all who were there were fully interested in the success of Hardy's and my undertaking, and offers of assistance were made by every one. Aided by all, we had no difficulty in collecting the necessary articles of our outfit, and Hardy's relief having arrived, we were ready to start by the time the repairs of the *Gulnare* were finished.

Our party consisted of myself, usually called by my friends Jock Murray, an independent gentleman, Tom Hardy, captain in the Bombay Staff Corps, the Arab whom I had met with Hardy at the tanks, and whose name was Hamees ibn Haméd, Aïto and the twelve other Galla slaves whom he had selected, and three of their women, and to take care of four horses which we decided on taking with us we had two Somâli boys, known by the nicknames of Bob and Dick.

Two of the horses were Hardy's, which he had brought from Bombay with him, and were both well-bred Arabs, while the other two were hacks from Aden, which if they were not much to look at were accustomed to work hard and do with very little food or water. Our arms consisted of two twelve-bore fowlingpieces, and a twelve-bore rifle, with thirty short sniders and sword bayonets, supplied by me with the assistance of Thomson and Trevelyan; while Hardy, who was a great shikar, brought another twelve-bore fowlingpiece, a heavy eight-bore rifle, and two express rifles; whilst from the Government stores we got half a dozen revolvers, and a number of old Enfield rifles for presents, and to arm such people as we might find it necessary to take into the interior with us.

Boots, saddlery, pigsticking spears, camp furniture, and in short all we could wish for in the way of the odds and ends necessary in rough travel were offered us by the resident and the officers of the garrison; indeed, if we had accepted one half of what our kind friends wished to give us we should have had to charter a much larger dhow than that of Nakhoda Nassib, and as it was we found that we had to occupy, not only the space under the poop which I had at first contracted for, but also a large portion of her hold.

Goods for barter I laid in, under the advice of the Rabbi and his friends, assisted by counsel from the skipper of the dhow and some Arab merchants; and as we heard that provisions were scarce at Marka we laid in a large quantity of rice and dried fish, much of which was shark, to feed our people, and also to use in payment for the hire of camels.

We also took a good supply of food for ourselves, and as Trevelyan said there would be no use in our roughing it more than necessary before we arrived at Marka, he put a most lavish supply of luxuries on board for us. The space under the poop where I and Hardy had our quarters was screened off and made quite a comfortable cabin, while out of common dhow canvas, which would probably come in usefully afterwards, we had awnings made over the poop for ourselves, and over the waist to shelter our horses, which were stowed in horseboxes supplied us by the commissariat.

We must not forget our dogs. I had had on board the *Gulnare* a large Cuban bloodhound, which when undisturbed was the most good-tempered beast alive. I was certain he would allow no one to ill-use me, and for Havana, as he was called, a special crib was made; and

Hardy had two Persian greyhounds, Schelhar and Nimshi, and a plucky little fox terrier called Boxer, which we thought would prove a good watch dog in our tents; and indeed whether as regarded arms, animals, medicines, or any other thing, we were most admirably eqipped, indeed I thought lavishly, but Trevelyan, though he had tried to dissuade from the undertaking, when he saw me regularly embarked on it, forced things upon us which I thought we would find it difficult to carry with us, and did not, in order to restrain his generosity, forbear telling him so, but he always answered that it was better to have too much than too little, and we could always throw things away if we could not carry them.

At last when everything was stowed on board the *Almass*, which was the name of Nassib's dhow, and all our farewells were made, the old Rabbi, who had not been seen outside the Jews' lines for many a year, came down to Steamer Point to give us a parting benediction, and the Moslem santon, Alowy ibn Zain el Aidûs, from whom we had been trying, and as we thought without avail, to get a letter, also appeared at the last moment and handed to Hardy a sealed packet, which, he said, we could open when we were at sea, and which, he said, would be found to contain all that we wanted.

The *Almass* was taken in tow by the *Gulnare*, and amid cheers from the *Albatross* and a number of friends who had assembled on the post office bunder we left the harbour of Aden, Hardy and myself remaining on board the yacht until the time that we parted company, both to enjoy the pleasure of Trevelyan's society, and also because the berths we occupied on board her were far more comfortable than those prepared for us on board the dhow. Aïto and Hamees ibn Haméd were also on board the

Gulnare, and Hamees we found could speak the Galla language, and gave us both lessons in it, whilst I also studied hard at Arabic.

As soon as we were fairly at sea we opened the packet which had been given us by Alowy ibn Zain el Aidûs, and found that it contained a recommendation to all Moslems whom we might meet on our journey to treat us with kindness, and to assist us in carrying out our desires, while contained in it was a paper covered with mysterious signs, and a note telling Hardy that it was his horoscope which he had cast, and that though he would have to go through many dangers and difficulties, he would return to his own home in safety, but that there were some things doubtful and not to be understood, which perhaps it was as well should remain so, as otherwise we might be deterred by the knowledge of what was going to occur from pressing forward, and through fear giving up our undertaking, and turning back, in which case nothing but misfortune and disaster would attend us.

"Turn back!" said Hardy when he read this; "it strikes me we have set our mind upon two things: I wish to find my brother, and you wish to visit this queen if she really exists, or if she does not, prove her to be no more than a myth. There's my hand on it, I won't turn back till both our objects are attained."

I wrung his hand and answered, "I promise that whilst the objects we have in view are unfulfilled I will never turn back; come weal, come woe, I will stand by you."

"All right, Murray," said Hardy; and Trevelyan, who was standing by, said:

"Well, such a promise as that deserves wetting. Here, steward, bring up a bottle of Roederer, and let us drink full success to the expedition."

Nothing worthy of mark happened during our passage to the west of Socotra, where Trevelyan decided on towing us, so that we should have the full benefit of the N.E. monsoon, and also avoid a current which at times makes up northwards even during that monsoon between Socotra and Ras Jerdafun, as the Arabs call Gardafui.

On leaving us, Trevelyan promised to come again to Aden to take us home in ten months' time, and if nothing had been heard of us he said he was not at all certain that he would not come to Marka and start inland to see what had become of us.

I begged of him to do nothing of the sort, as if we failed it would be a proof that the undertaking was dangerous, and there could be no use in his throwing away his life after we had lost ours. "And remember," I said, "you will be sure to hear of us and our doings from time to time. According to the monsoon our letters shall be sent to Zanzibar or Aden, and you will be able to electrify the people at Savile Row with the first news of the discoveries we are going to make."

"Very well, if your letters arrive; but if they don't, nothing shall stop me having a try to see what has become of you both."

"All right; now we must say good-bye, as Nassib has his sail ready for hoisting, and the boat is ready to take us on board."

"Well, I'm going to see you safe on board the dhow; jump into the boat; but, first, Murray, take this ring, and wear it always in remembrance of me. See, it is precisely like the one you have noticed I always wear, and has some runes on it which bring good fortune to the wearer."

I knew that this ring was an heirloom of Trevelyan's,

and that he valued it very much, and would fain have refused the gift, but he insisted on my accepting it, and at last, sooner than have any altercation about the matter, I allowed him to place it on my finger, from which he said I was never to remove it, or else, according to an old prophecy in his family, some great misfortune would happen to me.

"What! do you believe in such things?"

"Well, I don't know. You see, I am supposed to have some of Merlin's blood in my veins, and that is why my second name is Merlin; and so many things have occurred to my ancestors which are beyond the experience of ordinary mortals, that I cannot help believing that for some people the partition that divides the spirit world from this is to their senses more transparent than it is for the rest of humanity."

"Enough of this, now, old man. I have quite enough mystery from the old Rabbi; and Hardy's horoscope, as cast by Alowy ibn Zain, is mysterious enough; and I am sure if we find this queen and her country we shall come across things as strange as were ever treated of in any books of magic that have been written since the beginning of the world."

"Well, never mind; jump into the boat. I am sorry you have neither been able to make out anything more of those marks on the hides, but you will have time to study them again on the way to Marka, and perhaps you may yet get something out of them."

We got into the boat, and were soon on board the dhow, where Hamees and Aïto had preceded us, and where we found all in good order; and after more hearty farewells from Trevelyan, he left us to return to the *Gulnare*, and shape his course for Aden, whilst amidst a chorus of

shouts and yells the crew of the *Almass* swayed her heavy yard to the masthead, and we were soon running before the wind in the direction of Marka.

As soon as the *Gulnare* faded from our sight, Hardy said to me: "Now I feel fairly started on our trip. We are clear of steam and civilization, and now we are alone I wish to tell you why I have engaged Hamees ibn Haméd to come with me."

"Why, that is easy enough to say. You have known him a long time, have you not?"

"No; I never saw him before I met him where you found me with him at the tanks, but he proved to me then that he knew something about the country where we are bound, and you see he can speak to Aïto; but those are not the only reasons. He is also a freemason, and the first Arab I have ever come across who is one."

"You don't say so? Well, then, we are all three masons; but do you think that masonry will be of any use to us in this journey?"

"That I cannot tell; but we are starting for a place where, if all is true, we may encounter strange things, and perhaps masonry may prove to be of use to us; but, at all events, Hamees, being a mason, is more likely to stick to us than if he were not; and he is also something of a mystic, and I have at various times dabbled in mysticism and the supernatural, and am not at all inclined to disbelieve what I have seen and heard. Indeed, I have seen things which cannot be accounted for, except on the hypothesis that some persons have powers which are denied to ordinary mortals."

"Well, this is all very curious. The Rabbi teaches me the combinations of numbers, and gives me this case," said I, showing the Rabbi's gift, which I wore round my

neck. "Trevelyan gives me this ring, which he says as long as I wear it will protect me from evil. Then there is the horoscope of Alowy ibn Zain el Aidûs, and now Hamees ibn Haméd is a freemason and a mystic. Where is all this to lead us?"

"I certainly do not know," he replied; "but we must not trust to mysticism and supernatural assistance for our success. We must put our faith in will, determination, and perseverance"

"That's true; and now, to descend to practical matters, we had better have a look at the horses." And we went to examine the condition of our steeds. Askar and Sheikh, Hardy's two horses, neighed with delight when they saw their master, and we were delighted to find that so far they and the two Aden hacks had received no injury during the voyage. When we had seen the horses, we gave a general look round the dhow, and then getting some cushions on the poop, we sent for Hamees to speak to him about our proceedings when we should arrive at Marka.

CHAPTER IV.

HAMEES came to us, and in answer to our inquiries said that the first thing we should have to do would be to procure camels, which, as they were scarce and valuable, would be a difficult matter; but that he had friends among the inhabitants who would help him as far as they could; and that then we should have to get guides to take us into the interior past Barderah, which place we should leave some distance to the south, and then the knowledge of Aïto would be useful, and he himself having made some journeys from Barderah would be able to pick up some threads of knowledge. Our great difficulty at the commencement would be, he told us, from the numbers of wild beasts which we would encounter, lions, according to his description, being almost as plentiful as mosquitoes. "All right," said Hardy, "I want nothing better. But how about the people?"

"Eh! Howaja," said Hamees, "the people are fierce, and they will trouble you much unless we find their priests and make friends with them."

"True, O son of Haméd, but that is what you will have to do, or your friends the men of Marka. Are they fiercer than the English?"

"Truly your countrymen are fierce as fire. They are devils in the fight, but what can two Khalids, if both as brave as the sword of the prophet, do against thousands of heathen? It is a country in which a cool head and a clever tongue travel farther and safer than a firebrand."

"Your words are words of wisdom," answered Hardy; "but you must know that I and my friend, though we are warriors and fear not the fight, have the knowledge of old men, though our heads be not yet white; and, son of Haméd, remember that what the Englishman says he means. He has not two mouths; if he promises a heathen, he keeps that promise as if it was to his brother."

"I know the words of the English are true and to be trusted, or I would not have joined my masters in this journey. Though many times have I desired to visit the country of the great English queen I have not done so, but I know that in war the English are terrible, and now I am the servant of my masters, and my life is their life, and when I speak I speak from my heart to do them service and not injury."

"True, ibn Haméd, and now I will tell you why I am journeying into this country. Thirty years ago my brother, who was then a young man, was on board a ship sailing from England to India, and the ship was lost near the coast about Marka or Makdishu, and what became of my brother and the men that were with him we have never heard; but from time to time rumours have come that white men are kept as slaves in the interior, and though when inquiries have been made we have been told that these rumours were false, yet I have always believed my brother to be yet alive, and since I have seen these hides, which I will now show you, I am sure that until eight years ago he was still living."

Hamees was soon absorbed in the study of the hides, and said that hides similarly marked had from time to time been brought to the coast, and that they had always been cut up and made into amulets. After a time

he said that if we soaked the hides in water the markings would become more distinct, and we might be able to make out something more than we had done whilst they were dry.

As it was now getting late we deferred doing this till the next day, and, after a final pipe, and seeing that all was safe on board, Hardy and I turned in.

Next morning we anxiously watched the effect soaking would have on the skins, but notwithstanding that many more marks showed, we could only on the one on which was marked 1865 make out between the H and the Y an imperfect ϟ ϧ Γ, which doubtless were the remains of A R D, and with the H and Y would make up Hardy. Surely my companion's brother was alive then. The small pieces had a number of European letters marked on them, but they were not arranged in any order, and so Hardy copied them on paper exactly as they stood, and then saying he was going to make sense of them, shut himself up in a corner of the poop, and never came out save for meals or a pipe, while I passed my time in learning Arabic and Galla.

So the time passed on, and with the fair wind the *Almass* ran merrily on her course, and when we arrived off Marka, Hardy was still puzzling over his letters, and I and Hamees were beginning to be able to speak to each other. We sighted the land early in the morning, and Hardy said he would have wished for one more day to finish disentangling his letters, as he had at last, he thought, hit on a key, and hoped to obtain some knowledge. Of one thing he was certain—that his brother was the man who had made the marks. But besides the European letters he had found other characters which belonged to no language he knew of, and these, he

thought, should also be deciphered before we could get at the full meaning of the writing.

But this was put out of our heads for the time by the bustle of entering the port of Marka, where we found some half-dozen dhows lying under the lee of a reef, on which a heavy surf was beating, and the passage through which called out all the seamanship and skill of our nakhoda. As soon as our anchor was let go we saw a boat put off from a crowd of people who had assembled outside the walls of the town to watch our arrival, and coming alongside we found it contained the karani, or secretary, of the Wali Sheikh Nassur, who came to learn what news we had brought.

His astonishment on seeing two Englishmen on board was very great, and increased when he heard that we had come with the intention of landing at Marka and proceeding into the interior. At first he said that we would not be permitted to land, and that if we did our lives would be forfeit, and he loaded the poor nakhoda with abuse for having dared to bring two foreigners to spy out the land, who would—as all the Kaffirs they had ever heard of—endeavour to put a stop to their traffic in slaves.

On being shown the letter of Alowy ibn Zain he opened it reverently, and pressed it to his forehead in token of reverence; and when he had read it, he said that the friends of the son of Zain the Aidûs were his friends, and that he would return to his master with it to show him [illegible] we were; but he begged of us not to land until [illegible] sent word for us to do so, as otherwise he would [illegible] esponsible for our lives, for many dhows had [illegible] oyed by the ships of the English at Marka, [illegible] le were angry against the English.

Hamees ibn Haméd now came forward, and calling the secretary by his name, said:

"O Fieruz! these men are friends to the Arabs, and seek to do them good, and not harm; and the afrits who obey the orders of Solomon the son of David have them in their charge, and the man, woman, or child who lifts up hand or voice against them will be punished. You, Fieruz, the writer, know me, Hamees the son of Haméd, and the words that I have spoken are the words of truth."

"Truly, O son of Haméd, I know thee, and that thy words are to be relied on. I will hasten and inform the Sheikh Nassur of what thou hast said."

Fieruz soon made his way on shore again, and we could see that he caused considerable commotion among the crowds assembled on the beach; and soon we saw messengers despatched into the town, and then a large boat was launched and manned by eight rowers, in the stern-sheets of which four men seated themselves.

When the boat came alongside the first to come on board was a stately Arab, fully six feet in height, wearing a large turban of Muskat cloth and a long, gold-embroidered robe over his white shirt, while round his waist was a silken cloth, over which, by a belt studded with silver, was fastened a dagger in a scabbard of filigree work. In his hand he carried a long, straight, two-edged sword, and on his shoulder was a target of rhinoceros hide. This was the wali, the Sheikh Nassur; and though the silvery whiteness of his beard testified to his great age, his carriage and deportment were those of a man in the prime of life. Behind him came a Baluch, who commanded a body of those merçenaries in the employ of the sultan of Zanzibar, Fieruz, and an old

man whom we afterwards found was the principal mollah of the place.

As soon as they came on the poop they were provided with carpets and cushions to sit on, and coffee was handed round, after which the wali said that he heard we had a letter from ibn Zain el Aidûs for him, and he asked us to give it to him.

When he saw it he said that all that he had was ours, and that as soon as we landed he would place a house at our disposal for ourselves and our followers. I then thought it best to produce my letters from the Rabbi, and he said he remembered the mollah of the Ben Hoodi when he was a boy, and that he was then an old man, and that what he could do for his friends he would. "But," he went on, "you wish to visit the kingdom of the queen. Know that no man has ever gone there and returned for many long years, and many have gone before you to visit her country."

Hardy said: "True, O sheikh; but those who went went for riches and their own good, but my friend goes for knowledge and for the good of men, and I follow him to seek my only brother, the son of my father and the son of my mother, who many years ago was wrecked on this coast, and who is still living."

"O Englishmen! turn back whilst you have life; for you will lose your life if you try to see the queen; and your brother—how do you know he is living?"

"I have found on skins which have come to Aden the name of my brother, and for many years he lived; and if he lived long, there is not any reason why he should not be living now; and for a brother one will do much."

"True; if one the son of one father and one mother will not help his brother, no one will, and all our lives

are destined. If we are to die, we die; if we are to live, we live. It is kismet."

"Your words, O sheikh, are the words of truth; and I believe my kismet is to restore my brother to his country and his people."

Sheikh Nassur said that no man could tell what would happen; but that now we had to attend to the things of the day, and we had best set to work to get our horses and stores on shore.

The *Almass*, which had anchored some little distance from the shore, was now brought within a few yards of it, and all our attention was taken up with getting our animals and stores on shore safely. The horses seemed glad to feel themselves once more on dry land, and rolled on the sands in a manner that satisfied us that they had received no harm from their long voyage; the two belonging to Hardy were much admired; but the greatest astonishment and admiration was reserved for Havana, of whom the Arabs wanted to know the breed and uses, and if he was used for killing lions, as they said such a dog was like the one who was sent to Iskander (Alexander the Great) by the sultan of Hind to hunt elephants.

The wali told certain men to look after our belongings and led us to the gates of the town, which were entered across a small drawbridge, and then through a number of narrow lanes to a stone house built round a courtyard, which he said was at our disposal, and here we soon bestowed all our belongings; but Aïto and the other Gallas were not permitted to enter the town, and had to stop in some huts built outside, which were used by their countrymen when they came down to trade. Hamees ibn Haméd was most useful in getting all our traps ashore, and with the

help of the slaves of the wali and other chief men we had them all safely stowed away before nightfall, and the horses picketed in the courtyard, and at sunset we were left to ourselves, Sheikh Nassur, before quitting us, promising in the morning to come and help us about arranging for the carriage of our belongings into the interior.

When we were by ourselves, Hardy drew the paper on which he had copied the marks on the hides out of his pocket, and said: "I think I have made something out of what was written on the small pieces. You see I have counted up all the times that each mark recurs, and I fancy that they are a sort of cipher or alphabet; and now I am going to arrange them as well as I can, and see what I can make out; will you help me?"

"Certainly," I answered. And under his dictation I wrote down the marks he told me, and under each of them the number of times they occurred; and then we put the marks which we thought meant vowels on one side, and soon we found that his brother's name, Hugh Hardy, could be made out in two places; and with this clue we were not long before finding other letters, and before we went to sleep we had deciphered both pieces.

The first ran: "For seven years I Hugh Hardy have been a slave among the Gallas. Tom Smith died last year, the last of my companions of *St. Abbs*. Whoever may find this and understand it will know I am far in the interior. I cannot use letters, as my masters think them magic; but I have made this alphabet, and it may be understood. I can never be saved.—HUGH HARDY."

The second was: "I have been sold to another people, who I hear are not savages, but no one can leave their country. Farewell, hope of escape.—HUGH HARDY, only survivor of *St. Abbs*."

"That does not tell us much," I said; "but the people who are not savages must be the subjects of the queen."

"I should think so," said Hardy. "My poor brother! what a life of suffering he must have led from '54 to '78—twenty-four years—he existed by what we see here; and surely these last five years he may have lived through. I feel sure we shall rescue him."

"My hand on it," I said, "we will bring him back safe. Now let us get to work to think what we must take. We can get very few camels, and much will have to go on donkeys, which Sheikh Nassur says are fairly abundant among the people."

We soon began to make lists of our packages to take with us, and what we should leave behind, and it was nearly two o'clock before we lay down on our camp beds after a long and tiring day.

CHAPTER V.

At daylight in the morning Hamees came to us to say that the nakhoda of the *Almass* wished to bid us good-bye, and would take any letters, as he would very likely have a chance of sending them on from Brava to Zanzibar, even if he did not go there himself. So I wrote a short note to Trevelyan telling him of our safe arrival, and that we had deciphered some of the marks on the skins, and that Hardy's brother was certainly alive in 1876.

As soon as I had done this we gave it to the skipper of the dhow, and paid him for our passage, giving him besides a handsome present; and he departed well pleased. And then with Hamees we went to the baraza, or audience of Sheikh Nassur, and urged him to assist us in obtaining camels and donkeys. He said all that he had was ours; but we soon found that the prices we should have to pay would be heavy, and that, although he might be willing to assist us, there were many in the town who did not regard us with any favour, and that even if we did get some men to travel with us in the Galla country, no one could be induced to cross the boundaries of the queen's kingdom; and indeed we found that even the trade that had in days gone by been carried on with her subjects had nearly ceased. Nevertheless by the evening we had managed to buy twelve camels, and to hire men to drive them as far as the country was considered fairly safe; but we had to be

content with donkeys for many of our goods, and these we were told would have to be collected from far and wide. Aïto had found one or two people who knew something of his own parts, and these would go with us that far, but not one man save Hamees could be induced to go beyond.

"Never mind," said Hardy, "we will get there, and then our stores," which were mostly provisions, "will be much reduced, and I dare say the three of us may be able to manage what animals we then require."

The camels were wretched, weedy specimens, and even more vicious than camels usually are, and we found that not one of them would carry more than a hundred and fifty pounds; and as we were told we should have to carry water in many places, we had to reserve four of them for that purpose. Three camels were selected for our tent and camp furniture, and two for ammunition and arms; but of these one afterwards was freed, as the muskets we had intended to use for trade, Sheikh Nassur and his colleagues would not permit us to carry with us, and indeed it was with great difficulty that we could persuade him to allow us to take the sniders which Trevelyan had given me.

The two Somâli boys came to us whilst we were arranging about these camels, and said that they had heard so much about the dangers of the country we were going to travel in, that they would not go beyond the borders of their own countrymen, and would then leave us and wait for an opportunity to get back to Aden or their own people.

The horses we knew we could look after ourselves, and though we had hoped to take the two boys with us, still we did not think it fair to force them to go farther than

they thought safe. As to the people of Marka, they seemed, now we had bought the camels, to be determined to thwart us in every way; and in the evening, as we were passing the door of a mosque, on our way to the governor's, a man rushed from it, brandishing a sword, and made at us, swearing that "if he might but kill a dog of a Nazarene he would die happy."

Fortunately we heard him coming, and though no one attempted to restrain him, we were able in some measure to prepare ourselves for his onslaught, and faced round towards him. As he got close he made a sweeping cut at me, which I guarded with my stick, which was cut almost through, but before he could recover himself so as to deliver another blow, Hardy had hold of him by the two wrists, and telling me to let him settle with him, commenced wrestling, and soon, to my astonishment, I saw Hardy give him a twist and pitch him right over his head. The fanatic or madman lighted on his face and shoulder, and lay stunned, with blood running from his nose and mouth. Some of his companions who were following him seemed as if had they dared they would have liked to have followed up his attack, but they were so amazed at the way in which Hardy had treated him that they allowed us to go to the wali's baraza without further molestation.

Sheikh Nassur was profuse in his apologies for the occurrence, but said he could not guarantee our safety while we were in the town, unless we remained in the house which had been allotted to us, and begged of us to hasten our departure before some serious harm happened to us.

We said we wanted nothing more than to get away quickly, but until we were ready for the road we could

not leave; and we begged him to use his best endeavours to prevent our being molested, and also to aid us in getting donkeys and drivers.

He promised to do all he could, and caused us to be escorted back to our house by some of the Baluchis, whom he ordered to remain there as a guard.

Hardy asked Hamees when we were alone again how we could trust any people as camel-drivers, or to travel with us at all, if they were so hostile even to our presence in the town; and Hamees said he hardly knew what we could do, unless we obtained the freedom of some slaves and took them; and after weighing the *pros* and *cons* we decided upon adopting this course, and in the meantime we endeavoured to cut down all our baggage to the lowest possible amount. Overhauling our packages, and restoring them, kept us all three busily at work, and it was not till after midnight that we turned in, and then being thoroughly tired we were soon fast asleep.

But our rest was not destined to be unbroken, for Boxer, barking loudly, woke us up in about an hour, and jumping to our feet and seizing our revolvers we listened to hear what was disturbing him, and soon made out that men were in the next room to the one we were sleeping in. Havana, who had been lying by my bed, was aroused, and growling. So opening the door we went in and found that three men, stripped nearly naked and oiled, were attempting to rifle our packages. As we entered, Havana made a bound at them, but before he could seize one, or indeed before we got an aim at them with our pistols, the robbers were out through a small window from which they had removed the bars which guarded it, and had made their escape into the lane out-

side, one of them however leaving behind him a dagger and a small bag of skin.

We blocked up the window as best we could, and then searched the house to see if any more unwelcome visitors might be present, and found our Baluch guards all asleep. Rousing them out, we asked what was the good of their coming to watch if they slept instead of keeping a bright look out, when they excused themselves by asking how were they to know that men would come in the night. We warned them to keep a better watch in future, on pain of losing the present we intended to make them, and then having seen all our doors and windows well secured, we returned to our room, and before turning in examined the spoils we had made.

The dagger was a handsome one, but nothing very particular in pattern or manufacture; so that from it we could hope to learn little as to who our visitants had been; but in the skin bag was a written paper which Hardy and Hamees managed to read, and this we found to be a list of camping places into the interior, and remarks upon the water and food to be found at each. This was valuable to us, but no name told us to whom it had belonged, and we were fain to again turn in without having discovered any clue as to who the robbers might be.

Next morning the wali came to us to lament that any one should have broken into our house, and promising to do all in his power to discover and punish the offenders. The dagger and the bag, with the paper inside it, he said were no use to him, and he could only repeat what he had said the day before, and ask us to get away as soon as we could, as many of the people of the town were very hostile to us; and the friends of the man who had

attacked us the day before were clamouring to have us made prisoners, and sold as slaves, as so many of them had lost dhows and slaves through the action of British cruisers, and they argued that we ought to be made to pay for the acts of our countrymen.

To this Hamees replied: "O sheikh, you see two men here, who are English. They have come trusting in the truth of Arabs; will you have their brothers say that the words of Arabs are false, and the town of Marka is open to the guns of the sons of fire, the Beni Nar? If you harm one hair of the head of my friends, know that not one stone will be left on another in the town, but that all will be destroyed."

"O son of Haméd," replied the wali, "your words are true; but there are men in the town who have neither sense nor understanding, and they make words against the Ingliz. What is in my hand to do for thy friends I will do, but what is not given to me to do I cannot perform, and I cannot put the wisdom of men into the heads of brutes."

"Verily, Sheikh Nassur; but first we would leave Marka. You have here many slaves, men of Uhiao and men of the island, men from Mombasa and from Lamo. My friends desire to travel, and they have camels and they have horses, they have a man of the Gallas and twelve of his countrymen: now say unto them, I have men who shall go with you; where you go they will follow, and when you return they will return; and they will pay you in guns, in money, and things that will make your heart and the heart of your harem glad. Say, Sheikh Nassur el Wali, are not my words words of wisdom? Twenty men give to my friends, and it will be enough."

"Truly thy words are true. I will, for thy friends and because of the letters they have brought from ibn Zain el Aidûs, provide them with men, and even to-day there have come from Brava men having camels, and these camels shall be for thee and thy friends. Ten camels there are, and they are good for journeys, and to-day thou and thy friends shall have them in your hands, and to-morrow you shall depart in peace."

"Inshallah, thy words are words of comfort and wisdom."

Just at this moment a Msuahili came into the room, and was about to sit down with the governor and ourselves when Havana, who had been quietly lying down on a mat, at a short distance from us, sprang on him and threw him on the ground.

Instantly there was a scene of confusion, and whilst I dragged Havana off his captive, the wali said that he was afraid that all his words in the interest of peace and quietness would be wasted. And Hamees and Hardy had much trouble in getting him to resume his seat.

I too by this time had recognised the man Havana had attacked as one of the robbers, and Hardy improved the opportunity by showing how the dog had instantly known him, and how the dog would find out any one who attempted to rob us or do any injury.

The Msuahili sat looking as if he would wish the earth swallow him, while the governor asked him if it were that he had attempted to rob us.

[redacted] is true, but what sin is there in robbing a Nazá- [redacted] And what shame is there in being overcome by [redacted] big as a lion?"

[redacted]d I rapidly consulted together, and decided [redacted] be best for us to let this man go without

punishment, and accordingly Hardy said to the Wali: "O Sheikh, the man has failed to hurt us, let him go in peace, but let him say unto his friends that they who attempt to harm us will assuredly be punished. Yesterday was the first time, this is the second, let those who wish us evil beware of the third time."

As we were speaking the Msuahili caught sight of the case which the Rabbi had given me, which I always wore round my neck, and came and threw himself at my feet, calling me "Bwana Kubwa," or the great master, and begging me to forgive him, and to permit him to serve me.

I was at a loss to understand what he meant, when he seized upon the case, and said, "Wherever you, great master, got this you received a mighty power, and Mbarak wadi Gharib is bound to do your bidding."

This seemed to put an end at once to our difficulties, and Mbarak said that he was bound to go with us wherever we wished, and would not ask for any payment; but that he would be content with whatever we of our kindness might give him. And soon we had around us slaves and freed men clamouring to be employed, and in the course of a couple of hours we found ourselves leaders of a numerous body of men, and besides our camels, possessors of twenty sturdy donkeys.

When this was all finished I inquired why Mbarak had been so struck by the sight of the silver case, which the Rabbi had given me, and he replied:

"O great master, to me it is not given to know the powers which you possess, but when a child twenty and more rainy seasons ago, I was with my father when he met with one who carried that case, and my father would not do his bidding, when he took the life from my father, and

he was as one dead for many days, and then the man told his spirit to come back to his body, and he revived, and said he had seen many things which he could tell to no living man; and he obeyed the orders that were given to him, and he went with the man a long journey, and when he returned he was rewarded, but where he went he would never tell me nor any of his friends; but he said to me that if ever I saw one who wore that case I was to be unto him as a slave, and now my father is dead and I am obedient unto his commands."

I asked who the man was, and where he had gone, but Mbarak said that he could tell nothing, but that surely I knew, and what was the use of my asking questions of him, a poor ignorant Msuahili.

Hamees and Hardy also tried to find out what they could from Mbarak, but neither could get anything more out of him, and all we could do was to rejoice at the happy incident which had put a termination to our difficulties about forming our party into the interior.

Hardy and I when alone tried hard to think what the case could mean, or what it contained, for as far as we could see it was impossible to open it; but one thing we agreed on was, that it was certain that its possession invested us in the eyes of the whole population of Marka with mysterious powers and attributes, and had changed the attitude of hostility into one of friendship.

I was almost afraid that the whole thing would prove to be a dream, and that we should wake to find that we were still regarded with suspicion and hostility, and that our departure, instead of taking place the next morning as promised, would be delayed, even if we did succeed in getting away at all.

But no, all was true, and at daylight the next morning

we found all our animals and followers ready to go with us, and accompanied by Sheikh Nassur and the elders we proceeded over the sandhills lining the coast, and as soon as we had reached their summits we saw stretching before us a barren, spreading plain, dotted here and there with scrubby thorn bushes and candelabra-shaped euphorbia. Here Sheikh Nassur and his friends bade us good-bye, and warning us to beware of savage beasts, and still more savage men, returned to Marka, whilst we headed westwards towards the unknown.

CHAPTER VI.

Slowly down the long slope which lay in front of us we made our way, and soon on the sandy soil we saw evidences that proved to us that the warnings of Sheikh Nassur about wild beasts were not unneeded; and when at midday we arrived at a half-empty waterhole which Mbarak said would have to be our halting place for the day, we set to work to cut bushes to repair a ragged fence of thorns which previous wayfarers had left so that a lion or hyæna, if he should pass that way, would not be able to make a meal of any of our animals or followers. Our tent was soon pitched, and after looking after our horses, for whose comfort we made a sort of shelter of bushes to protect them from the rays of the westering sun, we were by no means sorry to take shelter under it, though even with all the sides triced up it was but a few degrees cooler than outside. Lounging on our beds, we could watch Hamees and Mbarak, as they arranged our baggage and served out rations to the men, while the camels were sent under the charge of Aïto and some of his Gallas to pick up what they could from the scrub and thorns about.

Soon fires were lighted, and meals cooked, and notwithstanding the heat our men seemed to enjoy themselves, Aïto and the other Gallas especially being delighted to find themselves on their way to their own country; but Hardy said how he pitied his brother if the country we were then in was any sample of what he had had to live in as a slave for so many years.

At sunset all our animals were driven inside the inclosure, and fires were lighted; but notwithstanding all our precautions, we were not fated to pass a night undisturbed by wild beasts, for soon after midnight the howling of hyænas and jackals, which had been pretty constant, ceased, and we heard the roaring of lions, at which our camels, horses, and donkeys were much frightened, and some of them, breaking from their pickets, stampeded, and in their fright came against our tent ropes, and brought the tent down about our ears; and whilst we were struggling to get free from the folds of canvas we heard the roaring of a lion in the midst of the camp, and the affrighted shrieks of our men as they fled in all directions. One horse we could feel was down on part of the tent, and kicking and struggling to get up, and for what seemed an age we could not clear ourselves, and thought that, even if we escaped the lion, we might be seriously damaged by the horse's hoofs.

At last I found I had hold of the edge of the canvas, and managed to get myself out, and then drag the side of the tent clear of Hardy. As we got to our feet by the light of the moon, which had risen about three hours, we could see all was in the wildest confusion, and that the lion was in the act of springing on one of the camels, whilst Hamees, with nothing but a two-handed sword, was striding towards him.

All the other men were either outside the fence or striving to make their way out, and it seemed as if we were destined to have our expedition wrecked at the very outset. Fortunately our heavy rifles were near at hand, and we seized upon them, and a cartridge belt, and ramming cartridges into them we made towards Hamees and the lion. The lion sprang on the camel, and we

heard its bones cracking, but just as the spring was made, Hamees delivered a swinging blow across the loins of the lion with his sword, which would, if it had fallen fair, no doubt have severed its backbone; but unfortunately the sword turned, and he struck with the flat instead of the edge, and the lion, leaving the camel, turned on him.

By marvellous activity Hamees managed to escape the blow of the lion's paw, and before it could give a second a bullet from Hardy's rifle crashed through its brain and stretched it lifeless. Hamees, without waiting to see whether the lion was dead or alive, gave a second blow with his sword which almost cut off the brute's head, and then commenced to call to the men to behave properly, secure the animals which were loose, repair the fence, and make up the fires.

But they were still in a state of fear, for they said there were other lions about, and a yell of a man in his death agony just outside the camp attracted us to where we saw one of the Gallas had been struck down by a lioness, which was now crouching on her prey, and switching her sides with her tail as she angrily regarded us as we approached.

Aïto came with us with a couple of spears, and before we could prevent him or fire at the lioness hurled one at her, which glancing off her shoulder only irritated her without doing any serious damage, and she sprang and struck down another man standing close by us. Hardy and I both fired into her, but without killing her, and our second barrels were also emptied, but though wounding her severely, left her still powerful for mischief.

As we were striving to reload, she turned quickly, and to my horror I saw Hardy knocked over, his rifle flying

out of his hand as he fell. I felt in a sort of daze, and seizing my rifle by the muzzle, the breach being still open, dealt the animal a blow on her head which smashed the butt, but had seemingly no effect on her, and was expecting to find myself between her claws when Hamees dashed a burning brand in her face, before which she retreated, but halted at some twenty paces' distance.

I seized on Hardy's rifle, and loading it fired carefully at the lioness, this time the bullet reached a mortal spot, and with a roar and a spring which brought her nearly to where I was standing she fell dead.

Looking round I was delighted and astonished to find Hardy standing beside me unhurt, and found that he had been knocked off his feet by the body of the lioness, and had been touched by neither claw nor tooth; but the two unfortunate Gallas had not been so fortunate, one indeed was already dead, and on raising the other from the ground we found that his chest was torn open, and that he had only a few minutes more to live. We carried the dead man and the dying one into camp, and did what we could to render the last moments of the latter as peaceful as possible, but he soon breathed his last. We now turned to, to restore order in the camp, and pitched the tent again, and on mustering our numbers we found that besides the two Gallas killed that Mbarak and five of the Marka men were missing, and that of the animals, besides the camel which the lion had mauled and which we had to put out of its misery, there were three donkeys short.

As soon as we had in some measure restored order, I proposed to Hardy that he should remain in the camp whilst I with some men should take firebrands and go in search of our missing comrades and animals; but just as we were

starting we heard shouts close outside the thorn fence, and there were our friends, and all but one of the donkeys, which they said had been carried off by a third lion.

We now began to inquire how it was that the lion had got into our camp, for what with fires and fence we had, before we turned in, considered ourselves nearly safe from any such disagreeable visitant; and found that soon after the moon rose, Mbarak had seen some animals coming to the pool to drink, and that he thought they were some sort of gazelle, and that one or two would be a welcome addition to our larder, so, rousing out some men, he opened the fence and stole down to the pool, but much to his disgust found that he was followed by the donkeys, and soon they were stampeded by the lions and driven away from the camp. He was afraid of getting into trouble with us if the donkeys were lost, and therefore went after them, heedless of the fact that the entrance into the camp had been left open, and by that the lion which caused most of the mischief must have obtained access.

Mbarak had got some distance from the camp before he heard the confusion in it, and considered it was best for him to follow after them than return; but when we were by ourselves once more, Hardy told me that he did not trust the fellow, and believed that he only accompanied us to get a chance of stealing the case given to me by the Rabbi. I could hardly agree in this; but when we considered that his carelessness, to use no stronger term, had cost us the lives of two men and a camel and donkey, we agreed that it would be well to watch his proceedings. As we were about to go to sleep again, we heard Hamees' voice at the entrance to the tent,

and bidding him enter, he came and sat on the ground between our beds, and said, "O my masters, the journey we are on is long, and the way difficult, and enemies are many; but worse than enemies like the wild beasts of the wilderness, are those who say they are friends, but who, like snakes, bite those who nourish them."

"Why, Hamees, what is the matter?" said Hardy.

"My master and my friend, Mbarak wadi Gharib did not go to shoot gazelles, for he took no gun in his hand, and the ropes which tied the donkeys are not broken, but were untied; he wished the donkeys to be lost in the wilderness."

"Good, Hamees; we will watch him," answered Hardy. "I believe he wants to steal the box given by the mollah of Ben Hoodi to my friend. He knows by what he says that it is a rare talisman; but he is foolish, and we will watch him and the men he brought with him."

"True," replied Hamees; "his father was called Gharib,[1] and a stranger he was to all the people of the island and the mainland (Zanzibar and Africa), and though he may be called blessing, his name is a lie; but my eyes are open, and he will not prevail against us."

"There, Jock," said Hardy to me, "I am right. Good-night, Hamees; we have two or three hours more for sleep, and then the road."

"Good-night, my masters," said Hamees.

As soon as we were alone, Hardy and I agreed to keep a good watch on Mbarak; but at the same time came to the conclusion that to dismiss him at once would be unwise, as he would doubtless be accompanied by all the men we had engaged at Marka, and that probably when

[1] *Gharib* means stranger, and *barak* blessing.

we were at some distance in the interior they would be afraid to desert us.

As the first rays of the sun showed above the hills to the east, we began to break up our camp, and Mbarak, whatever might be his ultimate designs, showed no symptoms of them, but on the contrary busied himself in arranging the loads so as to make up for the loss we had sustained during the night.

Aïto and his people buried their two countrymen without any form or ceremony, but I noticed that they cut off their hair, and carried it with them, and on my inquiring the reason, said that when we met with one of the holy places of their nation they would offer it there, in order that their friends might rest in peace.

Our road lay for the first few hours through thorn and scrub, like that of the day before; but by mid-day we came upon a more fertile country, and when we camped for the night it was on the banks of the Wabbi River, where we found a party of Somâlis, with their cattle and sheep, and from them we managed to obtain some donkeys to carry the loads of the camel and donkey which we had lost the night before, and some of them volunteered to go with us the next day to show us a sacred tree, where the hair of the man who had been killed might be offered up.

These Somâlis were in constant communication with Marka, and seemed to view our arrival with indifference; but they warned us that as we proceeded on our way we would be sure to meet with opposition from their countrymen, who were hostile to the Arabs, and said that it would be wise for us to turn back at once.

We endeavoured to find out from them if they knew anything of the queen's country, and also if they had

ever heard of any Europeans being prisoner among their own people; but to all our inquiries they answered that they knew nothing, and that the only man who would be able to tell us anything was the priest, who lived at the sacred tree where we should arrive the next day.

These Somâlis we found belonged to a tribe of the nation who extended some days' march in front of us, and they said that as far as their district reached we should be able to march without molestation, and that as near the headquarters of the tribe they cultivated the ground, there would be no difficulty in obtaining grain for our animals and men.

In making our camp we were careful to see that our fence or boma was strong enough to prevent any danger from wild beasts, and when the animals were picketed for the night we saw that they were secured properly, so that any of them getting loose would be impossible without treachery. Nothing occurred during the night, and in the morning, with the aid of the Somâlis, who made rafts of reeds and inflated skins, we ferried all our animals across the Wabbi without loss; though once or twice we were afraid that the crocodiles, which were numerous, might have caused us trouble, but Hardy and I shot four, and that seemed to scare the others away.

Soon after crossing we saw, away to the right of our road, a herd of seven giraffes, and changing from the Aden hacks which we were riding to the backs of Askar and Sheikh, and followed by Havana and the greyhounds, we took our rifles and went after them. A clump of trees allowed us to get within about a hundred yards of them without being observed, and Hardy, dismounting while I held his horse, fired at a fine fat cow which was nearest to us. His bullet took effect, but the

wound was not fatal, and the camelopards started off at a shuffling sort of trot, which took them over the ground at a great pace. Hardy remounting Askar we galloped after them, and the wounded one lagging behind its companions, after about a mile's gallop, I managed to get close up to her on the right side and fire my rifle into her shoulder at about ten paces, and was delighted to see her pitch on her knees, and then roll over on her side.

Some of our men were following us on foot, so leaving the cow for them to skin and cut up, we made after the others, which were about half a mile ahead of us, and closely followed by the dogs. One, the largest of the camelopards, soon turned to bay and defended himself against the dogs by kicking at them with his feet. The greyhounds did not seem to care much about coming to close quarters, but Havana would not be denied, and making a spring seized the animal by the breast and tore a huge piece out, but falling to the ground received a kick which rolled him over and over. Notwithstanding this, the brave brute tried to repeat its spring, but unsuccessfully, receiving more blows from the feet of the giraffe.

As we came up the giraffe again took to flight, and we had to ride hard to get up to him; but at last Hardy managed to get a shot into him at close quarters which turned him, and I coming up close behind repeated the dose, and with my second barrel rolled him over.

We sprang off our horses and loosened their girths to to give them a blow, and while I attended to Havana, whom I found was seriously bruised, Hardy got out his knife, and after cutting the giraffe's throat set to work to skin him.

Whilst we were employed in this manner, we were astonished to find a spear fly past us and pitch in the ground a few feet away.

Looking up we saw a party of about ten Gallas, with shields and spears, close by a piece of thorny brake, and one who, by his attitude, had evidently hurled his spear at us was urging his companions to follow his example.

CHAPTER VII.

Our horses were at some little distance, and we could see that before we could tighten their girths and mount, that we should be certainly knocked over, and therefore we had to face the danger out as best we might. I picked up my rifle and was about to fire at the man who had thrown his spear at us, but Hardy knocked my muzzle up, and said, "Don't be foolish, you may kill one or two, and may get away now, but we shall raise the whole country against us, do as I do."

He took his rifle and mine and fired them in the air, and then placing them on the ground advanced slowly towards the Gallas, with his arms extended and his hands open, saying, "Friends, friends!" I followed him, and could see that our assailants were regarding us with wonder, and that instead of throwing their spears at us, rested their butts on the ground and awaited our approach quietly.

We made them understand that we did not wish to have any conflict with them, and Aïto, who had been one of those who had followed us, came running up and asked them why they had attacked us.

The answer was that all the strangers that came into the country made slaves, and that therefore it was the duty of all Gallas to kill them. Aïto said that it might be true of those they had hitherto seen, but that he could say that we belonged to a people who, not only did not make slaves, but that on the contrary we released the

slaves made by other people, and that he himself had been made a slave by the Arabs, and that our countrymen had taken him from them, and that now he, a native of Orma, was going back to his country, and we were his friends.

The Gallas seemed much astonished at this, and said that they were even now in chase of a party of men from Marka who had made a raid into their country and driven off many cattle and five men and seven women, besides children, as slaves.

Aïto said that we had neither seen nor heard of the people of whom they were in chase, and as we had only left Marka two days before, we should have been sure to have met them if they were going there.

"No," said the spokesman of our new acquaintances; "see, here are the tracks of cattle and men, and see these footprints, they are those of children; they are close to."

At this moment Hamees rode up, having heard that we were in some difficulty, and looking at the tracks he said they were quite fresh, and that those who had made them could only have just passed by, and said that if we could manage to get these slaves released we would make friends with these Gallas, who came from some distance, and proposed that he should ride after the slaves and endeavour to come to terms with them.

To this we readily assented, and he rode off at a hard gallop and followed the tracks which led straight towards a large clump of trees, from which, as he approached, some shots were fired; but soon the firing ceased, and some men came out to speak to him.

After half an hour he came back to us, and said the slavers had made a boma (or strong fence) under the trees, and at first had said they would fight sooner than

give up any of the slaves or cattle; but that he had now prevailed upon them to release the slaves if we would give an order for a hundred dollars to be paid by the Rabbi, and the Gallas would promise to allow them to keep the cattle and go in peace.

At first the Gallas wished to fight, but after a long argument, in which Aïto and Hamées took part with the chief of our new acquaintances, the terms were agreed to, and Hamees rode off to tell the Marka people that if they would come to our camp they should have the draft on their releasing the slaves. In a short time all, Gallas, slavers, and slaves, were on their way together where our camp was to be formed in the neighbou of the sacred tree.

The man who had thrown the spear at Hardy a had his brother, wife, and two children among the to be released, and his delight at finding them a was intense; and one of the children, a pretty littl of about three years of age, he carried on his sho all the way to camp.

When we arrived we found the tent pitched and made close by a Somâli camp, near which was which was regarded as sacred, and where for many a Galla luba, or priest, had been settled. Aïto begg us to give him money to buy an ox to make a sac for the rest of the two men who had been killed, an night long we heard him and his friends, with the p weeping and wailing; but as we were told that presence would render their prayers and offering unav ing, we did not attempt to see what they did, but f time to time we heard great shouts of Waka, Wa which we were told was the Galla word for God.

On asking how it was that a Galla priest was set

so far from his own people, we found that at one time a Galla expedition had penetrated this far into the Somâli country, and had, before they returned, made a treaty with the Somâlis that a luba should always remain here to pray at the grave of one of their headmen, who had died and been buried here.

The slavers from Marka we found were great friends of Mbarak wadi Gharib, and said that they would be willing to travel with us; but as we did not trust Mbarak, we thought it was better not to strengthen his party in the camp, notwithstanding his urging that we should find these men most useful, as they were accustomed to travelling, and knew the country and watering places. So in the morning they went their way towards the coast, and having obtained two more camels from the Somâlis at this place, I made a litter for Havana to travel in, as I found the poor brute was so much injured as to be unable to walk; but, fortunately, in a few days he recovered completely.

Our next week's march was without incident, save our shooting a few antelopes and meeting a few parties of Somâlis, with whom, owing to the tact of Hamees, we had no difficulty. As we advanced farther into the interior we had been constantly rising, and were now some two thousand feet above the sea, and having kept north to avoid passing near Barderah, whose people Hamees said would be jealous of our going past their town into the interior, we were now just above the valley of the Jub River, abreast of Gananeh.

From all the Somâlis we had met, Hardy had tried to get news of his brother, but the only answers we got up to this time were that they had never heard of a European having ever been in the country before; but now

we heard that a white man had been heard of among the Gallas on the upper waters of the Jub River.

Two courses now lay before us, one, which seemed the better, was to go down to Gananeh, and then work up the bank of the Jub; and the other, avoiding Gananeh altogether, to keep farther to the north and strike the Jub River nearer its source. Gananeh was a place where we were likely to obtain information, and we should have had no doubt whatever about going there if it had not been that Mbarak urged us to do so, as, though since the night when the lions broke into the camp he had apparently been entirely devoted to us and our interests, we had not been able to divest ourselves of the idea that he was not true or loyal to our interests.

At last we decided on going there, as we heard it was a great depôt for collecting hides from the interior. We trusted that among them we might find some on which Hardy's brother might have written something, and so get some information as to his whereabouts and fate since the time he wrote the last that we had deciphered.

We were warned by the Somâlis whom we now saw that there was a race of dwarfs living near the Jub River who were very fierce and armed with poisoned arrows, which were so deadly that any person wounded by them died in a few minutes, and that no antidote was known against their poison; but to this, as to many other tales we heard, we turned a deaf ear.

Having decided on visiting Gananeh, we shaped our course for that place, and rapidly descending the hills we found ourselves, after three days' more marching, on the banks of the Jub, which was here a fine stream, and scattered about near were several Somâli camps, and standing near the river was actually a small town, in

which were some stone houses, which had been built by Arabs and Msuahili, who had come here to trade.

These came out to welcome us, and among them were evidently some who were friends of Mbarak wadi Gharib, and they said that anything they could do for him or his they would. Hamees said we had better accept their offers and lodge in one of the houses which they placed at our disposal, and in the meantime he would endeavour to find out if Mbarak meditated any treachery.

The house that was given to us was situated on the banks of the river, and had a large courtyard, in which we could keep all our animals at night, and there were rooms where our goods could be locked up; but Aïto and his Gallas, whom we trusted more than any other of our followers save Hamees, we were told, could not find quarters there, but must build huts for themselves outside the town. As we found that this was a universal rule we could not object, and Hamees sharing our quarters with us we thought that little harm could happen. Havana, who was now quite recovered, and the other dogs we thought would be sure to give the alarm if any one attempted to break in at night, and any open attack we did not think we should have to fear.

The first day we arrived there was nothing but gossip about the news which we had brought, and all the people we found here said that they would help us in every way, and promised to have all the skins they had in their possession examined to see if there were any among them on which there were marks that could have been made by Hardy's brother.

In the evening, however, Hamees came in and said that he had seen Mbarak in close consultation with a man who he believed possessed great power as a magician, and he

was certain that if Mbarak told this man that I possessed the case given me by the Rabbi that he would try to obtain it by fair means or foul. This was a great trouble, and I thought that if the case was to bring us into trouble I should do a wise thing to purchase the friendship of those who wished to obtain it by giving it up to them. Hamees and Hardy were, however, entirely opposed to this, and said that the possession of it no doubt conferred power on the owner, and that if I had not yet found out what that power was I would, as the Jew had said I might, when all seemed the darkest in our fortunes, open it and find help from what was inside it.

After chatting for some time we prepared to turn in, and Hamees took up his quarters in a small room without any window, and which was closed by a solid door, and in a larger room into which this opened Hardy and I slept. During the night I woke two or three times, and could not help feeling that something out of the ordinary was taking place; but Hardy and the dogs were sleeping peaceably, and when I struck a light I could see that everything in the room was exactly as it was when we had gone to sleep. At daylight I jumped up, and going to a table where our things were lying, I saw my pocket-book open, and on a page which had been blank the night before I saw, in the writing of Trevelyan, "To recover Hamees use the numbers of the Rabbi; do not open the case yet."

This was most extraordinary and astonishing, and I woke Hardy, and asked him what he thought of it; but he said he could see nothing of the writing, and indeed I think he thought I was delirious from fever or mad when I insisted that it was there. Suddenly I remembered the ring given me by Trevelyan on parting, and drawing it

off my finger I saw the writing no more, and then when I replaced the ring there it was as plain as possible.

Whilst I was doing this Hardy was calling for Hamees, and getting no reply, forced the door of his room open, it being bolted on the inside, and to his amazement found it empty. "How could he have got out?" he said; "there is something strange here." And as I told him how I could only see the writing when the ring was on my finger, he said, "Certainly do what it tells you." I at once got the paper the Rabbi had given me, and looking down it I found one of the combinations he had named was to compel the presence of any person.

Drawing out a sheet of paper, I inscribed the numbers in the prescribed form, and wrote round them the name of Hamees ibn Haméd; and then, folding the paper up, I set it on fire, saying, "Hamees son of Haméd, in the name of the All-wise and All-powerful, appear before me ere the paper is consumed." And immediately, to my intense astonishment, Hamees' form appeared lying on the floor at my feet; but he was quite insensible, and only a stertorous breathing showed that he was alive.

Another combination I saw was to restore a man to consciousness; so, with trembling eagerness, I made it, and Hamees regained his senses and sat up.

"Quick," he said, as soon as he opened his eyes; "all the powers of magic are being employed against us." And he, springing to his feet, hastily, with a piece of charcoal, inscribed a large pentacle on the floor, and forced Hardy and myself within its bounds. Scarcely had he done so when we heard wild and unearthly shrieks, and the dogs came close to us and crouched at our feet in abject terror.

"Summon Mbarak and his friend," said Hamees;

"'tis they who, by aid of the evil one, removed me hence and placed me in a dungeon, whence, thanks be to Allah! you have, by the power you possess, released me."

"Why, man, what is all this?" said Hardy.

"Mbarak has here found one who is in league with the evil one, and they wish to obtain the ring and case of the master, and as they can't steal them, they thought they might obtain them by asking for them as my ransom; but this is not a time for words, they are even now completing charms and invocations, and you must act, and quickly. Summon Mbarak the son of Gharib and Ali wadi Mshangama by the forms by which you brought me here, and then I will question them."

I saw there was no time to discuss matters if there was any truth in what Hamees said, and the occurrences of the morning certainly pointed to magic having an existence not dreamt of in this nineteenth century; and again I traced the figures, and by 13, 7, and 9 I summoned Mbarak and his friend, and then the forms of Mbarak and an old man, lying insensible on the floor, appeared, though neither door nor window opened, nor did any visible aperture in walls, roof, or floor appear by which they could have arrived.

Hamees now said: "What other charms does the master possess? Let me see what he has."

I said: "Here I have the ring of my friend whom you saw at Aden, and the case given me by the Rabbi, and these writings given me also by the Rabbi; and here is this book, in which I can see writing by my friend, though the eyes of my comrade are not open so that they may read it."

"The ways of the All-wise are beyond the knowledge of men," replied Hamees; "but before I read the writings

of the mollah of the Jews I will narrate the occurrences of the night. I yesterday saw that Mbarak had met an old friend in Ali who lies there, and in the town all said that Ali was a magician, and I feared that he would harm me, and therefore I chose that room to sleep in, lest he should come to me while I slept and work some charm on me. After I lay down for the night I remained waking for many hours, and at last I fell into a state in which I could neither move hand nor foot nor utter a word, though I was still conscious; and soon I felt myself raised up, and I was carried through the walls and through the air, and deposited in a room where Ali and Mbarak were making invocations, and where fumes were arising from a censer. When they saw me, Ali said: 'It is well. We have no power over the wearer of the ring and case, and his friend would never steal them for us; but this Arab we may compel to obtain them, and then we shall have power granted to us beyond anything to which I have yet attained.'

"They then called some slaves, and binding me hand and foot carried me to a dungeon below the house in which they were, and by promises of giving me all I could wish in this world, tried to induce me to promise to steal your ring and case; and when promises were of none avail, they used threats, and then when I remained firm they made a fire of charcoal and heated irons in it, for the purpose of burning out my eyes, and I prayed that I might be delivered. The irons were heated, and then they said that unless I would write and ask you to send the ring and the case they would blind me; and as I still refused, they were about to carry out their purpose when I felt myself seized by invisible arms and my bonds dropped from my limbs, and I was brought here

in the same manner that I was taken hence. But I felt that those who obeyed your summons were hindered by others who tried to tear me from them, and in the struggle I became insensible. Now I will read the words of the Jew."

He took the papers on which I had written the incantations and combinations of the Rabbi, and when, with the aid of Hardy and myself, he had mastered their contents, he said: "It is well. Here is one by which we can protect this house from the attacks of the evil spirits who do the bidding of Ali, and who even now are hovering round outside the limits of the sacred figure which I have traced."

I at once, with the aid of Hamees and Tom Hardy, wrote the numbers in the way in which the Jew had directed; and immediately we could hear the sound as of departing wings, and the dogs, which all this time had been cowering at our feet, and showing signs of abject terror, regained their natural appearance, and left the limits of the pentacle.

"The dumb beasts," said Hamees, "can see that which mortal man, unless power is given him, is powerless to perceive; but now we will restore these two to their senses, and we may force them to tell us truth."

Mbarak and the old man Ali were therefore restored to consciousness by the same means as we had used in the case of Hamees, and we proceeded to question them. At first they would not answer, but Hamees adjured them by one of the names of Allah, and unable to resist they told us as follows:

The father of Mbarak was a magician, and had in his time possessed much power, but he had always in great undertakings been thwarted by some superior power, and

this power he believed was wielded by a man who owned the case which I wore round my neck, and in endeavouring to obtain it he had lost his life. Mbarak had inherited some of his father's power, and had also been a pupil of Ali wadi Mshangama, and they both possessed power over evil spirits; but though they had worked much wickedness, and killed by the black art many whom they hated, they always found that the spirits who came to their beck and call were overruled by a mightier power, and this power was in the possession of those who had knowledge of the mystery of the numbers, and, above all, of one who possessed a silver case in which was contained a mighty talisman, and this case was the one given to me by the Jew, and that it had been seen in the possession of a man by Mbarak's father, as I had been told by Mbarak at Marka, but that what it contained they did not know.

We also asked if anything had been seen or heard of Hardy's brother, and the answer was that he had been sent long ago into the country of the queen.

"Why, Tom," said I to Hardy, "can we not bring your brother here by the same means that we brought Hamees back and got these two fellows here?"

"Certainly," said Hardy. "How astonished Hugh would be to suddenly find himself with us instead of being a slave!"

I was about to summon him, when Hamees interrupted me, and said: "Wait, masters; remember when I was brought back the condition I was in. The brother of my masters may be in the hands of magicians, and spirits whom they command may struggle with those who bring your brother here, and in the struggle they may kill him, and he who is bereft of life lives not again in this world.

Again, my masters, to compel the services of spirits is permitted when nothing else will avail, but he who uses them for all purposes will sooner or later fall into their power, and his end will be miserable."

"What then do you advise?" I said.

"I advise my masters to have patience, and to travel to the country of the great queen, and there, with the aid of Allah, we will rescue your brother, and return in safety to our own countries. I am one with my masters in this, and I know that in the queen's country I will learn that for which I have been seeking all my life."

"What do you say, Tom?" I said to Hardy.

"Why, Jock, it is hard to say, but I do not wish to risk Hugh's life."

"Certainly not. I wonder what Trevelyan would say."

As I said this I felt the ring given me by Trevelyan pricking my finger, and looking at the page of the pocket-book where I had seen his writing in the morning I saw, "Hamees' advice is good; never use extraordinary means when ordinary will do."

CHAPTER VIII.

As I read this out Hamees said: "Truly the friend of the master is powerful, and his words are true; but we have now to deal with these two men. If we release them they will cause us harm and trouble, and we must take them with us."

"How can we do that? We shall be attacked by their friends if we take them with us as prisoners," said Hardy.

"It is true, masters," replied Hamees; "but we may take them with us, and no one be any the wiser."

"Why, I do not see how that can be done."

"My masters possess great power and knowledge, and to Hamees the son of Haméd power is also given. I have here with me medicines, of which I can make an ointment; and when I have anointed these men with it they will take the form of such animals as I desire, and we will put them in a cage and carry them with us."

Mbarak and Ali, when they heard what Hamees proposed, begged and prayed to be spared, and said that they would always be our slaves and do our bidding.

"Do not trust them, masters; they will when free do all they can to harm you. Into what animals will you that I change them?"

"Let us see," said Hardy. "They must not be big, or we should find it hard to carry them. I have it; we will turn them into rats, and then we can keep them in boxes. We will line the boxes with biscuit-tins, so that they

cannot gnaw their way out, and if they do Boxer will catch them; he will never take his eyes off them."

"Turn them into rats, Hamees."

"Rats, masters, it shall be done; but why rats?"

Hardy explained, and Hamees laughed at the idea, but said it must be remembered that if they were killed they would instantly resume their own form; but it is just that they should be turned into rats, as Mbarak broke into your house at Marka like a rat. I will prepare the ointment."

Hardy and I, who after what had happened hardly knew whether we were standing on our heads or our heels, or whether the occurrences of the morning were not the baseless visions of a dream, set to work to make two boxes, which we lined with biscuit-tins and fitted with bars, so that the inmates should always be open to inspection, and these we fastened at each end of another larger box, in which we made a bed for Boxer, so that if by any chance our prisoners got out of their cages he would be able to nail them at once.

When we had finished them Hamees had completed his preparations for making the ointment, and now called us to assist him.

He had drawn a circle inscribed in a triangle, and in this he had placed a brazier full of charcoal, and on the brazier was an earthen pot half full of glue. To me he gave a stick, with which I was to keep stirring the pot, whilst on a table he had arranged some drugs, which he told Tom Hardy he was to put in successively as he told him, whilst he himself, he said, was to make an invocation while the pot was boiling.

The charcoal was lighted, and then I kept stirring the contents as if my life depended on it, and Hamees, kneeling

by the side, chanted a series of verses. Carefully watching the surface of the glue from time to time he motioned Hardy to add the other ingredients, and soon the glue began to thicken and bubble, while it gave off a musky smell. As Tom Hardy threw in the last drug two rats, which came from whence I know not, leaped into the boiling compound, and as I stirred they seemed to melt away and disappear. As the last traces of them vanished, Hamees said, "It is finished," and took the pot off the fire.

As he did so it struck me that the rats, into which Mbarak and Ali were to be changed, would very likely escape from us before we could put them in their cages, and I mentioned this to Hamees, who said, "Does not the small white dog kill rats? I will tell them that if they do not go at once into the cages the dog will kill them."

"Very well, but may they not risk it? And if the dog kills them, as you say they regain their human form in death, we shall have their bodies to dispose of."

"Let them see the dog kill a rat, and then fear will enter into them, and they will go into their cages without difficulty."

This idea was acted on; and as the old house was full of rats it was not long before we managed to get two or three, which, for the edification of our prisoners, Boxer disposed of in most artistic style.

Both Mbarak and Ali wept, and implored to be spared such a fate as they saw before them; but we were inexorable, and Hamees, anointing Ali, said, "By the powers given to Suliman ibn Daood, and by the knowledge he possessed, I command you, Ali the son of Mshangama, to take upon you the form of a rat."

Strange as it may appear, Ali, who was a biggish man,

gradually shrank and lessened, and his face grew long, while his hands and feet changed into paws, and a tail grew; so that in about five minutes from the time that Hamees commenced to rub the ointment on him, he had, from a man, passed into the corporeal being of a rat.

Boxer was standing by watching with intense interest, and if Hardy had not held him before the transformed Ali could have reached a haven of safety in the cage that was prepared for him, he would certainly have nailed him. Once Ali was in his cage, I fastened the bars, and then Mbarak was transformed and imprisoned in like manner.

"Who will ever believe us when we tell them this at home?" said Hardy. "My poor brother must have seen some curious things in this witches' country. I wonder they never turned him into a beast of some sort."

"Certainly, Tom, I do not expect any one will believe us; but that will not matter, for we know what we have seen is true, and whether they condemn as as romancers or as madmen, we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that what we say is correct, and of having seen a world outside that of the matter-of-fact science of the present day. But it is no use speculating as to what will be believed or not, for it seems to me that we have a lot to do before we turn our footsteps homeward; and all this magic, or whatever we may call it, does not seem to be of much use, except against people who exercise a similar power. But look at those rats; how vicious they look! I'll bet they'd like to change places with us for a bit. It isn't in a comfortable cage that we'd be for long, if I can judge by the temper they're showing."

"Never mind, they're safe enough now. Here, Boxer, good dog, watch." And Boxer laid down between the

cages and licked his chaps as if nothing would give him greater joy than to serve these rats as he had served the others just before.

"Now, Hamees," I said, "how are we to get on from here? Aïto and his people will soon be in their own country, and then they will leave, and the people we engaged at Marka are certain to go no farther now. Mbarak will be missing."

"Ah! my masters, the journey is long and difficult, but it is no use to look for difficulties before they come. Aïto is a man among his people, and he will help us; and when we have passed through the country of the Gallas, we shall be near that of the great queen, and then we shall be either stopped or helped on our way."

As I supposed, the Marka people soon came to us, and said that Mbarak was missing, and that they could not find his friend Ali, with whom he had lodged, and they would not go any farther until they knew what had become of them. I said that surely they knew where Mbarak and Ali were, and that I and my friends, who had a long journey before them, could not afford to wait, because Mbarak for his own purposes chose to hide himself.

One who was the spokesman said that he and his companions would not stir a foot without Mbarak, and that if we attempted to go on without him they would prevent us by force.

Thinking it was better to temporise with them than to come to blows, which in their temper seemed likely enough, I said I would give them three days in which to look for Mbarak and his friend, and when the three days were ended I would again discuss the matter with them.

With this they professed themselves satisfied, and left

us to look for Mbarak; and as soon as they were gone I said to Hardy: "Now we have to get the sniders we were foolish enough to let those fellows have away from them. How shall we manage it?"

"The only way I can see is to tell them to bring them here for us to overhaul them and see that they are all right."

"Can you do this, Hamees?" I asked.

"Yes, my master. And now the camels, horses, and donkeys must have food. I will tell Aïto that he and his men must get provender for them, and they will bring it by the river to the courtyard; and I will also speak to the Arabs who are merchants here, and perhaps we may find some means of getting men to go with us."

Hamees soon left us on these errands, and I and Hardy being left together had a long talk over matters. The extraordinary occurrences of the past night and morning provided enough for us to think about; but still more extraordinary to me than the abduction and recovery of Hamees was the writing of Trevelyan in my pocket-book.

"You remember, Hardy, how I told you what he said when he gave me the ring, that he was supposed to be descended from Merlin, and how some extraordinary things had happened to his ancestors. I wonder if, as he said, the partition between the world of spirits and this has become so transparent that he can communicate with it."

"I don't know, Jock; all I know is this, that there are extraordinary things happening, and I intend to accept them as they come. I have always had an idea that such things might be, and now I see that they are."

"Well, I suppose your philosophical way of looking at [redacted] is the best; and now as we cannot, I suppose,

trust to the carpet of Solomon or to genii to transport our belongings, let us see how we are to manage."

"We have animals enough, and if Aïto can manage to frank us through Orma or the Galla country, we shall not then be far from the end of our journey; and we might leave all but the absolute necessaries behind, and with Hamees and our two selves and the horses and a couple of camels go on till we meet with some of the subjects of this queen. Is it not curious that we have never yet heard her name, or that of her country? The old Rabbi supposes her to be a descendant of the queen of Sheba."

"Well, for all we know she may be, and she may have inherited so much wisdom from her ancestress that visited Solomon that she has kept her country to herself and not mixed up with the neighbouring peoples."

Our conversation was interrupted by the return of Hamees, who said that there was a great excitement in Gananeh, owing to the disappearance of Mbarak and Ali, and that we were supposed to have caused it, and that at any moment we might be attacked.

"It is unlucky that we have let those Marka fellows have the sniders," said Hardy; "but I do not think they can have much ammunition, as they fired off their guns at everything they saw on the way up. How much did we serve out on starting?"

"Only forty rounds," I replied; "and I know some men have none, as they were asking for more a week ago. I wonder if they have stolen any."

"Let us look; we shall soon know the worst."

On overhauling our baggage we found that one case of snider ammunition, containing four hundred and eighty rounds, was missing, and that a large quantity of beads

and cloth had been stolen, the bales being stuffed with grass and stones so as to retain their original shape and weight.

"Hallo! what's that?" I said, as I heard a great knocking at our door.

Hamees went down, and soon returned, bringing with him our two Somâli boys—Dick and Bob, from Aden,—who said they had heard the Marka people proposing to rob us; and as we were only three, they said that there would be little or no danger in doing so, and that no one could punish them.

"When do they intend to do so?" asked Hardy.

"What time sun go down," answered Dick.

"Well, we may manage to keep them off if we can get Aïto here with his men, but the question will be how we can get away afterwards," said Hardy. "But here come Aïto and his men, floating down the stream."

Aïto, when told of the intentions of the Marka men, said that if we would take his advice we would make floats of the rafts on which he had brought down forage for the animals, and get them all to the other side of the river, where we could then march into his own country; and his people would defend us in return for our having freed him and his companions.

"How far are your people away?" said Hamees to Aïto. "We might hold the house for a long time, and if you sent men to tell the nearest Gallas of what was happening, they might come to our assistance. We have lots of ammunition, and can block the doors up with stones and bales, and could easily hold out for two or three days; the river will give us water."

"The villages of Gallas are not far," replied Aïto,

"and to-morrow men may be here to help the Englishmen who have freed me."

"Good, Aïto," I said. "Will your men fight by our sides until your countrymen come?"

"You have given us freedom, which is more than life; our lives are yours, master."

"Well then, Aïto, you and two of your men go to your countrymen, and the rest with Bob and Dick here will help us."

"Yes, sahib," said Bob; "at Marka we say what time you catch Galla country we two leave you. But sahibs be good man; we stay with them, come die come live; man only die one time."

"That's right, my boys," said Hardy; "you stand by us, and we will, if we get back to Aden safely, make you rich men."

"That be so, sahib," said Dick and Bob together. "See, we both got gun, and Marka man he no got cartridge; he use all on road."

Aïto and two of his men instantly plunged into the river and swam away to the other side, while we, with those that were left, began to make preparations for defending ourselves. We found that the door of the courtyard could easily be blocked up, and as the only entrance to the house was by it, we could, from the windows, shoot down all that climbed over the wall; and bringing all the animals that we could into the lower rooms, we picketed the remainder away from the wall, near which we piled the grass brought by the Gallas for forage in heaps, so that we could set it on fire so as to give us light to see our assailants. The first floor windows we barricaded, and arranged loopholes in, and were progressing well with our arrangements when some

of the men whom we had engaged at Marka came and said they wished to speak with us. We admitted six of them, and asked what they wanted, when they told us that they were without ammunition, and wished us to give some for them to go and search for Ali and Mbarak. Hamees advised us to get them into the house under the pretence of complying with their demand, and then, if they gave trouble, we might overpower them, and keep them as hostages for the good behaviour of their companions and friends.

As soon as they had come in and were seated, I told Hamees to say to them that they ought to have plenty of ammunition, and if they had wasted it we could give them no more. At first they begged for more; but as we still refused they became insolent, and said that if we would not give it them they would take it, and that we were in their power, and that if they chose they could take all our goods and our lives too, and that no one could say them nay.

We still refused, and one of them drew his knife and rushed at Hardy, who let out with his left, and catching him on the temple, felled him like a bullock. The others also rushed on, and I got a wound on the arm from one. But the Gallas and Bob and Dick, who had been waiting in an adjoining room, coming in, after a scuffle of about ten minutes we had them all secured; but not before two of the Gallas had been wounded by their knives. Fortunately none of the wounds were serious, and Hamees and Hardy soon bandaged them up; and although my arm was painful, it was the left one, so that I could still use a pistol, and even on a pinch fire a gun.

Meanwhile, the rest of the Marka people, together with some of the friends and slaves of Ali, were knocking

at the door of the courtyard, and clamouring for admittance, swearing that if they were not let in they would break in.

Hardy, with his rifle, took post at one of the windows, so as to cover the door, whilst Hamees went to speak with the men outside. Hamees asked them what they wanted, and if their behaviour was proper towards friends and visitors; but all the reply that he got was that we should let them in, and tell them where Ali and Mbarak were.

At last they seemed to lose patience, and commenced to try and clamber over the wall, when Hamees said that if they did we would fire at them, and that unless they went away and left us in peace and quietness we would kill their companions whom we had made prisoners.

"Kill them, and we will kill every one of you," said the men; and some bolder than the rest got on top of the wall. Calling to Hamees to rush into the house, Hardy, with a right and left shot, knocked over the first two men, and the others who were getting up dropped down again, and for a time we were left alone.

But this was not for long; for Hardy, looking out of the window to see what was going on, a bullet, fired from a house about fifty yards away, flattened on the stonework by his head, and immediately after a volley was fired at us from this house. Fortunately Hardy had drawn back into the room, for some bullets passed through the window where he had been standing, and we could hear the enemy, as we must now call them, shouting to men near the wall to climb over, while their friends in the house kept up a fire on the windows of ours so as to prevent our shooting at the storming party.

It was now no time to stand upon ceremony, so telling

Bob and Dick to keep the guns loaded, Hardy and I, with the two Gallas, put some bales in the windows, and then commenced firing at the men getting over the wall. We fired carefully, and knocked over some, but others managed to get over, and close under the walls of the house, where we could not reach them, and commenced slaughtering the animals we had not been able to get into the house, and collecting the grass that we had prepared for lighting, piled it against the door, and set fire to it.

The smoke and flame drove us from our windows, and it seemed as if we should be smoked out; so mustering all our forces, we opened the door and made a rush out, pushing the fire before us with poles, and with our pistols firing into the men that were in the courtyard. Hardy got hold of a club from one of them, and wielding it with both hands, knocked them down right and left; and Havana pulled down several, and in about ten minutes we were masters of the courtyard, when the men in the house commenced firing at us again, and one of the bullets, before we could again get inside the house, killed poor Dick, the Aden Somâli boy. His chum, Bob, caught up the corpse, and carried it under cover; and when he found his friend was dead, he was like one demented, and unless we had restrained him would have killed our prisoners.

The firing upon our house now ceased, and evidently our enemies were planning some new method of attack, and we determined to utilise the time they gave us to improve our defences; and though we could not go outside without drawing the fire of the men in the house opposite on us, we managed to make some more loopholes, and then, as the attack on us had been so utterly

unprovoked, we placed two of them in each of the three windows, so that if their friends fired at us they would more likely hit them than us.

The day passed away slowly and drearily. Mbarak and Ali in their cages being very excited, and trying to gnaw their way out; but their every movement was jealously watched by Boxer, and we felt assured that they could be safely left to his guardianship.

CHAPTER IX.

At last night fell, and we were afraid lest, under the cover of darkness, a new attack might be made on us. But all was quiet for some hours, until about midnight, Havana began to show signs of uneasiness, and tried to go down on the ground floor. As, except the door, there was no opening there, and that was now strongly barricaded, and we could hear no sounds of any one working at it, we for some time would not let him go down, as we were afraid of his disturbing the wounded men, whom we had placed there as the quietest and coolest place; but at last Hamees said, "Masters, the dog knows something which is hidden from us," and begged of us to allow Havana to go down.

As soon as we gave him permission, the dog bounded down the stairs, and after smelling about for some time, began to dig furiously with his paws. "What!" said Hardy, "are they going to attack us from underneath?"

When Hamees knew what he had said, he cried out, "The dog is wise; there are men who are robbers among those who are fighting us, and they are burrowing underground." And as he said this, the earth where Havana was digging gave way, and Havana seized upon the arm of a man who was in a hole underneath the ground.

This man we instantly dragged up and secured, and Hardy springing into the hole, I followed him, and found that a tunnel about four feet square had been driven under the walls of the house, and that powder had been

brought, and a match lighted, so that if it had not been for the vigilance of Havana, in another five minutes we should have been blown up. I, who had followed Hardy, pulled the match from the powder and extinguished it, but at the same moment a volley of small arms was fired along the tunnel, and I felt a bullet strike my right arm, passing through the upper part, while Hardy was hit in the calf of his leg. We were drawn up by our friends above, and now the question arose how we were to prevent our foes, who evidently would stand at nothing, from again putting a match to the powder and lighting it. Fortunately where we had got into the tunnel was between the powder and the way it had been driven, so we piled down earth so as to cut off access; but the men who had driven the tunnel kept on trying to remove it as fast as we put it down, and it was not until we had captured three of them that they desisted.

As soon as the tunnel was blocked we dug the powder up and stowed it carefully away, and trusted that now this method of attack had failed we should be left alone. But before long we heard the report of a cannon; a shot struck the walls of the house, though fortunately without penetrating them. Another and another shot followed, and as the darkness was too great for us to see the men working it, we began to fear that the walls would give way before these repeated attacks, and that before Aïto and his friends could arrive we should be left shelterless. Hardy said if it had not been for the wound in his leg he would have rushed out and tried to capture the gun, but both he and I were helpless; and although Hamees volunteered to go out with four of the Gallas who were with us, we did not think it wise that they should run the risk. Again and again the shot struck the walls,

and at last a great mass of masonry fell down, leaving an open space. This we blocked up with goods and the dead bodies of the animals which had been killed. But we saw that by daylight we should be left without shelter, even if the whole house did not come down about our ears before then.

I was about to open the case, when I felt the ring pinching me again, and remembering what had happened before, I opened my pocket-book, and saw written, "Be not impatient, help is at hand."

Sure enough, in another ten minutes we heard the shouts of a large body of men, and in a few minutes Gananeh was full of Gallas, and soon Aïto was with us, and the danger was past. For a short time firing went on in different places, but before half an hour the Gallas had overcome all opposition, and were masters of the place.

Aïto brought a man to us, who, he said, was an ally of his brother, and whom he had met about ten miles from Gananeh, which place he was on his way to attack, in revenge for slave raids which had been made into Galla-land by men from Marka and Brava, assisted by the Somâlis, and no inducement was necessary to make him hasten to our relief.

When daylight came, Gananeh was devoted to plunder and destruction, and the whole of the inhabitants would have been slaughtered if we had not interfered on their behalf; but after much persuasion we got Aïto and Saka, as the man commanding the Gallas was called, to allow them to take canoes and rafts and make their escape down the Jub River, though Saka said that it was unwise, and that though from a lion, a monkey, or even a hyæna, a man might expect gratitude, from men who had done evil to one it was useless to expect it.

Aïto, now he was among his countrymen, did all that lay in his power to show his gratitude to us, and finding that we were wounded, said he would bring a medicine-man who would dress our wounds, and by charms and plaisters insure a speedy cure.

Soon he brought to us a luba, or priest, who was attended by two kalijas, or medicine-men; and they at once, with signs and charms, bound up our wounds, which fortunately were only flesh ones, with some cataplasms of cooling herbs, and said that these must not be removed for ten days, at the end of which time the wounds would be healed.

We at once felt the comfort of these applications; and as Saka, who was a heyu, or chief, desired to return to his own country without loss of time, with the plunder his men had made in Gananeh, we rigged up with long poles, on which we placed our camp beds, two litters, over which Aïto had roofs of grass made, and each of these we placed on two donkeys, one in front and one behind, and found that they were a most luxurious mode of transport.

We were, before we could start, troubled to find carriage for our goods, as all our camels except two had been killed when our enemies had got into the court-yard; and though we had saved all four of our horses and some ten donkeys, we should have been compelled to abandon much of our belongings if we had not obtained more donkeys from the Gallas, as they all considered it beneath their dignity to carry a load for hire, and even their own scanty belongings of sleeping mats and cooking pots were carried by women and slaves, as an Orma thinks that his arms are all which a warrior should bear.

Fortunately in Gananeh they had found some forty

asses, and of these we managed to purchase twenty, which, when we had paid for them, and made presents to the Heyu Saka and his headmen, and feed the priests and magicians, carried all that we considered essential. The two camels that remained we were told would be of little or no use in the country through which we were going to march, as it was covered with woods, under the branches of which it would be difficult for them to pass; and the luba begged them of us to sacrifice at a sacred tree, or woda, called the Woda Baki, at which they had been engaged in worship when Aïto had found them, and prevailed on them to come to our relief and assistance.

Hamees advised us to consent to this, and said that though the luba was higher in rank than the kalijas, it would be advantageous for us to make friends with the latter, as they exercised great influence over their countrymen, being supposed to have power over the sar, or evil spirits, of whom they believe in eighty-eight, which are divided into two orders, each ruled over by its own chief.

One order causes all illnesses to which men and animals are subject, and the other exercises a malign influence over the vegetable and mineral kingdoms, and causes floods, droughts, and other evils. These chiefs of the sar are supposed to reside in two serpents, which dwell at the summits of two lofty hills, the access to which is prevented by the presence of myriads of venomous snakes. The kalijas, as might be expected with a belief of this kind, are mighty snake-charmers, and, as we afterwards found, besides having a knowledge of herbs and simples, are no mean proficients in *legerdemain*.

We, of course, followed up Hamees' advice, and presented the luba and kalijas with a quantity of tobacco, of which all the Gallas are inordinately fond, and which

they do, not only smoke, chew, and take in the form of snuff, but also use in a way which has been described by travellers as prevailing on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. A small gourd is filled with water, and in it tobacco is steeped until the liquid is thick and dark, and then it is sniffed into the nostrils and retained there by a pair of small nippers which are placed on the bridge of the nose, and an old and practised indulger in this habit will often keep the stuff up his nose for ten or twelve minutes. The appearance of half a dozen men who are enjoying this luxury, each with a pair of nippers astride of his nose, is comical in the extreme, and when I first saw a party of men squatting on the ground in a circle, I could not help laughing at the ludicrous spectacle they presented.

All the preparations for our march being made, and having been ferried across the Jub on rafts made of reeds and skins, which were propelled by paddles and directed by two rudders of a very ingenious construction, we set out towards the Woda Baki, which we reached about an hour after sunset. Here we found the Gallas had a regular camp, laid out in divisions, each of which was occupied by a body of men under a subordinate chief, and in the centre was a large, clear space, in which were the huts of the heyu and his ministers and guards; and close to them our tent was pitched and our animals picketed, while Aïto and the other Gallas whom we had brought from Aden built huts for themselves hard by.

In the whole of this camp most perfect order was maintained, and day and night guard was kept, not only against possible enemies and wild beasts, but also for the maintenance of discipline. When we arrived I was astonished to hear the neighing of horses; and on speaking to Hamees about it, he told me that the Gallas

possessed many horses, and usually made use of them in war, but that they had not taken any to the attack on Gananeh for fear of their alarming the enemy by neighing, and also on account of the delay that ferrying them across the Jub would have caused.

Scarcely was our tent pitched when the Heyu Saka came to visit us, attended by his chief men and Aïto, and demanded to know the reasons why we had come into his country. Through Aïto we told him that we were in search of our brother, who for many years had been lost, and who we believed was now in the country of the great queen of which we had heard.

"True, ye white men, wearing clothes of a pattern we have never seen, a man of the appearance of the big man has been for many years in the country of the Gallas, and he was the servant of my father; but once my father went towards the country of the queen, and he met her warriors, who were mounted on horses and clad in iron, and they fought with my father, and made him a prisoner, and they would have killed him, but he obtained his release by giving to the warriors of the queen his rarest and most valuable possessions, and among them the one that was most valued was this white servant, and when the warriors of the queen saw him they rejoiced greatly, and said that for many hundreds of years they had never seen a man like unto him."

"What did they do to him?" asked Hardy, when this had been translated to us. "Did they kill him or ill-use him?"

"No; they took him and clothed him in robes of white, and said that they would take him to the town of the great queen, where he would be made to attend on her; for, many many years ago, the queen who then

reigned had made a journey into a far country, to the place where a king ruled who was the wisest man that lived; and when she returned she brought with her men who taught her people how to build towns, and to make things of iron, of copper, and of gold, and that these men's graves existed to the present day, and the likeness of these men was like the white man that lived as a servant to my father."

"Well, Tom," I said, "your brother is alive and well now; how shall we get him away?"

"Never mind that; let us find him first, Jock, and then we shall see about getting him away."

The heyu continued: "Do the friends of Aïto desire to visit the country of the queen? They must know that they who enter in can never return, and they will not bring their brother away, but will live and die as servants of the queen."

Hamees answered him: "You do not know the English. When they say they will do a thing they do it, and turn not aside for any danger, and where his friends go there Hamees the son of Haméd will go."

"It is well," said the heyu. "When a man is wilful none can restrain his will. But now Aïto is brother of my friend, and he says that you have befriended him. Now know that we Gallas live as free men, and the strangers that have come into our country have taken our sons as slaves and our daughters as concubines, and even, as in the case of Aïto, have by deceit overcome our warriors and carried them away captive. We are strong men, and hold our country by strength, and when our warriors see strangers they kill them. Now I have heard how the Ingliz do not make slaves, but that from the Arabs they take men who have been made slaves, and restore them

to freedom; and the presence of Aïto and these others is a proof that these words are true, and therefore the Ingliz are the friends of the Gallas, and to-morrow I will proclaim that the two white men and the Arab Hamees are mogasa (or brothers) of the Heyu Saka, and also of the Heyu Bala, the brother of Aïto, and that he who harms them will suffer death. It is enough; I, the Heyu Saka, have spoken."

As he finished speaking, the luba and other men who were present said: "It is well; the words of the Heyu are good. The Ingliz and Hamees are mogasa of Saka and Bala; and the great god Waka, and the god Oglie, and his wife Atetie, will punish those who harm them."

We thanked the heyu for his declaration, and then were left alone, and carefully looking after the cages, in which were the two rats into which Mbarak and Ali had been changed, we went to sleep, Hamees sleeping in the tent with us, in order to be able to attend to us in case we might want anything during the night. The boy Bob, who was much afraid of the Gallas, slept at our tent door with the dogs, and soon all was quiet.

Soon after I went to sleep I dreamed that I saw Trevelyan, and that he was dressed in a curious white robe, with a golden chaplet on his head and a rod in his hand, and I thought he was going to speak to me, when I was awakened by a pistol shot, and, sitting up, I saw Hardy had just fired his revolver off, and that a man had fallen across Hamees. Hamees sprang on his feet, and, looking at the man Hardy had shot, saw that it was Ali ibn Mshangama, who had been killed by a bullet through the heart. "How is this?" he said, and rushed to the cages, and found poor Boxer had been strangled, and that the two rats had escaped from their cages.

Hamees said: "We have done wrong; some friend of Ali has done this. When we let the men from Gananeh escape, we should have found if there were any who shared his knowledge and power and have made them prisoners; but what is done is done. And now Mbarak is at liberty, and will work us evil, I must protect our tent from him and those who released him and Ali."

In a few moments he had a fire burning, into which he cast a handful of some stuff from a small bag he wore tied to his girdle, and which caused a dense smoke, and then began to chant rapidly in a low tone some words, of which I could only distinguish "Suliman ibn Daood."

Soon the smoke began to assume a shape, and gradually formed into the figure of a man of commanding stature and great beauty. As soon as he was fully formed, Hamees said, in a loud voice: "You, Tebaza, have failed in your duty. Know ye not that to thy care I am confided; now, by the throne of Solomon, I command you to watch over me and my friends, and prevent Mbarak ibn Gharib and the friends of Ali from harming me and my friends. If you fail, you will be sealed in a bottle and taken to the city of Nuhas, and there cast into the fiery dungeon. I have spoken; it is enough."

Tebaza answered: "Tebaza is in fault; but Tebaza cannot be in all places, and Tebaza had gone to Nuhas to see the fairest of afrits; but now Tebaza will watch."

"It is well," said Hamees; "but for another fifty years you will have to be the servant of mortals, instead of regaining thy freedom."

As Hamees finished speaking, Tebaza faded away, and Hamees said: "I have used a charm I never thought I should have recourse to; but now, unless Mbarak commands a spirit stronger than Tebaza, we are safe."

Hardy and I together asked what we had seen meant, and Hamees said: "At my birth a wise man, the friend of my father, confided me to the care of Tebaza, who is one of the genii, who were subject to Solomon, and hung round my neck this bag, by burning some of the contents of which I can summon Tebaza to my presence; but only a small quantity remains, and of that I must be careful."

"Well," said Hardy, "I am becoming more and more astonished. I was lying awake, when suddenly I saw a man by you, Hamees, who had raised a dagger as if to stab you; so pulling my revolver from under my pillow, I fired just as he was about to stab you."

"Hamees was the friend of his master before, now he is his slave," was Hamees' answer. "Now my masters must sleep, and I will give them medicine that they may sleep soundly, and their wounds heal."

"Can we not get Mbarak back?" I said.

"No; not until a moon has passed can the invocation you used have power over Mbarak; but my masters must sleep, or their wounds will become bad."

Hardy and I, who both felt feverish and excited, took the draught Hamees made for us, and soon we were again asleep, and slept without dreams or waking until it was broad daylight.

CHAPTER X.

As soon as we awoke, the question presented itself to us, what we should do with the body of Ali. We did not like to tell the Gallas that we had changed our enemies into rats, for fear that they would consider us magicians, and that the kalijas, jealous of rivals, would raise up their countrymen against us. So we decided on telling Aïto that Hardy had awoke in the night, and, seeing a man in the act of stabbing Hamees, had shot him, and ask him to get the body buried without fuss or trouble.

Whilst we were talking about this, Bob came in and said: "O masters, great news be true. That man, Mbarak, he be found dead; one snake bite him. Him close to what Galla make god, and one kalija man keep plenty snake there. One bad snake bite him, and he die one time; but funny ting be, where snake bite him piece skin all same rat, but——"

"Well, we are clear of him too," I said, and told Hamees what the boy had said, and he replied:

"My masters, we are safe from him. The friend who changed Ali back into a man could only release Mbarak; and he, as a rat, was going to find some man who could release him from that form, and he must have passed near the place where the kalijas keep their snakes and got bitten by one. When the Gallas see him, they will think that both Mbarak and Ali were coming to try to rob and murder us."

Aïto now came in, and seeing Ali's dead body, he told

us again of Mbarak's death, and sent for some men to throw both the corpses into the jungle; and then said that he wished us to come out for the proclamation to be made that we were the mogasa of the Heyu Saka, and for the men present at this place to march past us, that they might know us, and not be able to plead ignorance of our appearance as an excuse if they did us any injury.

Our beds were taken out, and placed under an open shed close by the sacred tree; and between them, the heyu stood, with Aïto on the one side and Hamees on the other, and behind and on either side the shed were grouped drummers and beaters of bells and cymbals, whilst in front, on a tall pole, surmounted by a plume of ostrich feathers, was the shield of the heyu, which was formed of buffalo hide, and fringed with manes and tails of zebras, whilst on it, on a white ground, was painted the sacred serpent of the Gallas in the attitude of darting. At the foot of this pole the luba and four criers stood, and the men who were to defile in front of us were drawn up at some little distance away to the left.

As soon as we were comfortably arranged, sitting up on our beds, the heyu gave an order for the drummers and bell-men to strike up, and for ten minutes they made a most infernal noise, which was answered by the drummers of the different detachments of the assembled Gallas; and then, as they suddenly ceased, the luba and the criers shouted out, "O Gallas, strong men, who own the authority of the Heyu Saka, advance and behold the three men who are mogasa of the heyu, and know that all evil that is done to them will be punished as if they were Gallas."

To this the men answered, "It is well; we will see the

mogasa of our heyu." And then the two kalijas appeared, dancing and leaping, with live snakes twining round their necks, and shouting out that all the sar would plague those who harmed the mogasa of the Heyu Saka, and any person who stole their goods would be bitten by snakes. They were followed by some attendants bearing baskets, and when they arrived near the luba they halted, and, squatting down, opened these baskets, in which were yet more snakes, which, as they came out in obedience to the command of their masters, ranged themselves in lines by the side of the line the men who were coming were to pass; and the heyu told Hamees to say to us that any man who meditated treachery against us would be bitten by the snakes.

A roulade on the drums now gave the signal for the march past to commence, and first came a body of a hundred and fifty horsemen, mounted on ponies of about twelve hands, of which many were pie and skew-bald. These men were all armed with lances and shields, and between their left leg and the pad of skin which served them as a saddle they carried a long, two-edged broadsword in a scabbard of hide. Their bridles were made of twisted hide, and a loop at the end of a piece of cord, in which the great toe was inserted, served as stirrups.

At the head rode their commander, who was distinguished by the beauty and length of the ostrich plumes which formed his head-dress, and by wearing a leopard skin cloak hanging from his left shoulder; on his shield, which was painted red, white, and black, was the sign of the crescent, which I afterwards found was peculiar to the horsemen of the Gallas. His followers were divided into three divisions, each under its own leader, and the

leading troop had all its shields red, the next white, and the rear division black. The captains of the troops were distinguished from their men by a crescent on their shields and a single ostrich feather floating from a circlet of skin round their heads.

All the men were handsome, athletic fellows—indeed the whole nation of the Gallas are remarkable for their beauty, and are of a pleasant bronze colour; and though they seemed too large for their ponies, the hardy little beasts carried them well. These cavalry came past in single file at a walk, and the men of each troop, as it came in front of us, leant over from their saddles, and touching the ground marked their foreheads with dust, and exclaimed as one, "The mogasa of our heyu are the care of the horsemen of Méla (the name of their commander) in war, and in the chase they will protect them, and their enemies they will punish and destroy." As soon as they had passed at a walk they wheeled and, making a circle round, again came past, but this time at full gallop, and again bending down and touching the ground as they came in front of us.

Next came the guards of the heyu on foot, all armed with spears for thrusting at close quarters, and a sheaf of assegais inside their shields, which were all painted white, and had on them a serpent similar to that on his shield. These were all picked men, and were divided into two bodies of one hundred, each under the command of a mounted captain and four other officers on foot, who, as in the case of the officers of the cavalry, wore plumes of ostrich feathers.

These came past in fours, and kept their distance and dressing admirably, and on arriving abreast of the pole on which the heyu's shield was displayed, halted and faced

towards us, and then, at the word of command, knelt down and knocked their foreheads three times on the ground, and then rising to their feet, shouted together, "Our lives are in the hands of Waka; but if Waka permits, we will give our lives for the mogasa of our Heyu Saka!"

They then resumed their march at the double, and were followed by different divisions, each division consisting of the men of a certain age. First came those who were first for war, being men between twenty-five and thirty; next, those from twenty to twenty-five; and then those between thirty and thirty-five. These composed what might be considered the active army, and Aïto told us that until they had distinguished themselves in war or the chase they were not permitted to marry or have a voice in the government of the tribe, or the election of the heyu, which office, we found, was held for seven years. After them came what might be considered the cadet corps, every boy on arriving at the age of ten being separated from his women relatives, and carefully drilled under the supervision of the old men of the tribe.

After the cadets came the men above forty, who only were called upon for war in times of national danger; and last of all came the old men who no longer could bear arms, but who, in consideration of their past services, were privileged to act as councillors to the heyu.

All as they passed knelt down and shouted as the guards had done, and then the women and children came by, but among them no order was preserved.

In all, I suppose, nearly four thousand people must have defiled in front of us, and the warriors as a fighting force were much more formidable than I supposed any savages could be; and I was much astonished that any

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Somâlis, Msuahili, or Arabs dared to make slave raids into a country that could command such an efficient body of combatants.

Mentioning this to Aïto, he said that the raids were only made when the fighting men were away, and that his countrymen, not having fire-arms, were at a great disadvantage when compared with men that had, and that the raids were very rare, and often disastrous to those that made them.

Saka now said that all his people knew us, and that we and our belongings were safe, and invited us to come to him to a wodaja, or gathering of men for drinking and smoking, where we would meet the old men and chiefs; but we were feeling pain from our wounds, and begged to be excused. So we were permitted to return to our tents to rest, but had to promise that the next day we would be present at the festival in honour of Waka, which was to be held under the Woda Baki, and which was the reason of Saka and his people having come to this place.

When we were in the tent, I told Hardy how I had dreamed the night before that I had seen Trevelyan, and described the way in which he was dressed; and Hardy answered, that perhaps the following night I might see him again, and if I did, I was to be sure to ask him what was going to be the outcome of all the astonishing things that had happened to us. "I think too we might ask Hamees more about how he raised that spirit last night, and if he can explain anything to us. We are groping along like blind men, and each day, and almost each hour, brings some new and astonishing thing to our knowledge. That there is such a thing as magic I do believe I thoroughly believe, but I should be a fool not

to believe it after what we have seen, and I also believe it exercises a powerful influence not only here, but even in the civilized world."

"Why, if there is so much of it here, there may well be some in England also. But, you see, hitherto we have not come in contact with it there, and we have to deal with what we are brought face to face with here; and as we may have magic to contend with, we must avail ourselves of whatever aid of the same sort we find. Now I wonder if Hamees will tell us anything of how he obtained the knowledge and power he possesses."

"Certainly; why not? Here he comes. Hamees, we want to know how you became possessed of the knowledge which enabled you to turn Mbarak and Ali into rats, and raise the spirit last night."

"My masters, I had thought that I would never speak on this matter; but as our lots have become one, I will tell what I can. The power that I possess is but little, and my knowledge is limited, and both are derived from my father, who was the servant of a man who even now lives at Mis'r (Cairo), who was one of the magicians who stood before Pharaoh in the time of Moussa. This man, by the knowledge he possesses, has lived for all this time, and is master of the wisdom of the Egyptians, and is the only one whom Solomon the son of David permitted to remain on earth to whom the secret of prolonging life was known. I have never seen him, as my father, whom he selected as a pupil, incurred his displeasure by entering into a chamber in which some of his most secret possessions were kept, and into which he had forbidden my father ever even to look upon. My father was discharged, and soon after died, leaving my mother alone in the world, with me, a child of three years old, to care for. When I

was twenty, my mother gave me my father's papers, and a box containing drugs, charms, and amulets; and reading these papers gave me a desire to know more; and my mother dying soon after, when I had completed the days of mourning, I made my way to Mis'r, and begged of Amasis, as the sage whom my father had served is named, to receive me as a servant and pupil.

"Amasis said the fault of my father was not expiated, and that before he would accept my services I must find and bring to him a stone from the signet of Solomon, which was still on earth, and of which, notwithstanding all his knowledge, he could not discover the possessor or whereabouts. He gave me letters to various learned men in different parts of Syria and Arabia, and told me to travel and learn, and in every place endeavour to discover where this precious stone might be concealed. I have studied at El Shems (Damascus), at Homs, and at Hamath, in the school of Abul Feda, the historian and geographer, and also at Kufa, Mecca, and El Kuds; and thus I have obtained much knowledge; at Hamath I heard of this country which you are desirous of visiting, and have three times endeavoured to reach it, but always failed. I was at Aden with the idea of finding out from the sons of Judah there whether they could help me, when I dreamed that if I went to the tanks I would meet one who would visit the country, and the likeness of the person I was to see was revealed to me, and it was the likeness of you, master (to Hardy). Many days I frequented the neighbourhood of the tanks, which were first made by Suliman ibn Daood to supply his ships which sailed to Hind and Serendib and the coast of the Barr el Sodan, and after many days I saw you.

"The knowledge I have, I have acquired from the

papers of my father and at the schools where I have studied, and the power to change men into the form of beasts, and to summon the afrit Tebaza, resides in the drugs I found in the box of my father, and was given to him at my birth by Amasis; and now I have but few left, and unless I am able to find the stone of which I am in search, when they are used I shall fall into the power of the afrits, who now serve Sheitan; but my hope is strong that, with the aid of my masters, I shall succeed in my search, and that Amasis will receive me with joy, and all the knowledge of the Egyptians of old will be unfolded to me."

"Certainly, Hamees, this is most extraordinary," I said. "But what did you learn of this country which we seek in the school of Abul Feda?"

"Many things, and most wonderful; but my lips are sealed, and my masters themselves will see and learn all that is permitted to be known; but"—giving each of us the master grip of a mason—"by the oath that has never been broken, I will be true to my masters, and if they die, I will die with them."

"That is a good promise, Hamees," said Hardy; "but now I think both Murray and myself require rest; so, if you will give us another of your sleeping potions, it will be well."

The draughts were soon made, and Hardy and I slept for many hours, and I again dreamed that I saw Trevelyan, robed as when I had seen him when I was awoke by the pistol shot which killed Ali, and he said: "Old friend, I am now learning much which I never believed to be possible, but you also will come to know and believe. I am permitted to give you advice, and perhaps may, when you are in danger, assist you. I first

must tell you to trust in Hamees, as he is true; but you are threatened with danger from many evil spirits, who fear, if he is successful in his search, that their power of mischief will be curbed; and you, Hardy, and he, will have need of all your courage and care to get safely through your undertaking. But fear not; by the Divine mystery of numbers entrusted to you by the Rabbi, who knew not their power, and, indeed, could not know their full power, for his knowledge was imperfect, increased by the command of twenty-nine, which you will find explained in your note-book when you awake, you will overcome most, and as the last resource, when these fail, you may open the silver case given you at Aden: but beware of doing this unnecessarily, as it may bring about the most disastrous effects."

I thanked Trevelyan, and asked him the meaning of the robes he wore.

"That I may not now tell you, but in time it shall be revealed to you. Now I must depart. Farewell! Courage and caution!"

So saying, Trevelyan faded from my sight, and I awoke to find the day dawning, and Hamees at my side with a cup of coffee, while Hardy was sitting up in his bed smoking.

"You have slept well," said Hardy. "Have you had pleasant dreams?"

"I have seen Trevelyan; and now where is my note-book? I must see if what I dreamed is true."

Hamees gave me the book, and opening it I found that on some blank pages which were left below where I had written what the Rabbi had told me of the power of numbers, was 29, and some directions in Trevelyan's handwriting for its combination with 7, 13, and 19. The

first rule I saw was one for the healing of wounds, and with the aid of Hardy—my wounds preventing me from describing the figures properly—I made this combination for the benefit of Hardy and myself. Instantly all the pain we were feeling left us, and stripping off our bandages we found neither mark nor scar of the injuries we had received.

"Come," said Hardy, "we are well now. I can mount my horse again, and we can show ourselves to these Gallas like men. Hamees, have the horses saddled, Shiddun, Shiddun! and we will ride to the sacred tree to see the sacrifices made."

CHAPTER XI.

When Aïto heard that the horses were going to be saddled he came running to our tent, and finding us both recovered of our wounds, said that the medicine of the kalijas was to be praised for it; and, as we were desirous of keeping friends with them, we did not undeceive him, and sent a handsome present by his hand to the luba and the two kalijas; and then, mounting our horses, rode down to the Woda Baki, where we found three great piles of wood had been made, on which the camels and a cow (which it was hinted that we should pay for) were to be sacrificed.

Saka and Aïto, with the officers of the Gallas, were all collected round these altars, clad in white; and at the centre one stood the luba and his attendants, with the camel destined to be offered to Waka, and at each of the other ones were two of his subordinates, who, with their assistants, were to sacrifice the other camel and the cow to Oglie and Atetie. In a circle round the tree and altar were assembled all the warriors we had seen the day before; but now their arms were piled, and they were devoid of all the martial trappings in which they had gloried when they marched past.

As soon as we were seen approaching, a great shout of welcome went up to the mogasa of the heyu, and Saka invited us to dismount and take up our places with him and the other chiefs.

As soon as we got down from our horses they were led

away, and we were given stools to sit on, and perfect silence reigning among all the people, we had time to look round on the strange scene before us. In the centre rose the Woda Baki, a huge tree, under whose branches a regiment might have been sheltered, and whose trunk was covered with pieces of cloth, shields, spears, the horns and skins of wild animals, and other articles, which had at various times been offered by Gallas in fulfilment of vows made in times of danger or illness. Under the tree were the two kalijas with their snakes, and the way in which they handled the most deadly, and permitted them to crawl about their bodies, was most startling.

The luba and his two subordinates, or pupils, stood by the altars, grasping short, broad, two-edged knives in their right hands, while their long and floating locks were bound round their foreheads by a band of leather, in the centre of which was a copper crescent. Of clothing they were destitute, and in their left hands they held bunches of iron and copper bells. The Gallas who surrounded the whole space were now mute and motionless, and might have been taken for bronze statues, so perfect was their immobility, while their eyes were intently fixed on the luba and those who were to sacrifice with him.

At a signal from Saka the two camels and the cow were dragged to the ground and their throats cut; and then the luba ripped them open, and from an inspection of their entrails prophesied that the friendship of the Heyu Saka for his mogasa would be profitable to the Gallas. And now ensued a scene which was revolting; for all those officiating in the sacrifices coiled the reeking entrails round their necks and bodies, while with wild shouts and gestures they tore the animals in pieces, and

piled them on the altars, which were then fired. The wood was dry, and blazed up quickly, nor was it long before all three were reduced to ashes; but the whole time they were burning the luba and his men danced round and round them, their naked bodies dripping with the blood of their victims, and the entrails slipping and sliding about them. At last these too were thrown on the smouldering embers, and when they were consumed, the dancers all sank on their knees and shouted out, "O Waka the mighty, Oglie the brave, Atetie the bountiful, be good to the Gallas! May they conquer in war, be successful in the chase, and fortunate in harvest! Hear us, O Waka! and listen, Oglie and Atetie!"

When they had finished this invocation, the Heyu Saka, accompanied by Aïto, went up to each of the altars in succession, and the luba rubbed ashes on their foreheads, and they then came back and marked Hardy, Hamees, and myself with them. As soon as this was done, the whole of the men present, who had hitherto maintained a perfect silence, shouted out, "O Waka, hear us! Oglie and Atetie, listen! The mogasa of the Heyu Saka are the children of the Gallas." And then there arose a perfect din of drums and bells, every man producing one or two of the latter.

This continued for some time, and then, at a signal from Saka, ceased as suddenly as it had commenced, and Aïto telling us the sacrifice was now finished, we accompanied him and Saka to the hut of the latter. Our departure was the signal for all the Gallas to rush in and scramble for the ashes, and in a few minutes scarce a vestige of them remained on the ground.

At Saka's hut we found a meal of beef and beer had been prepared, of which we had to partake; and then,

after smoking out of a pipe, which we were told was always handed on from heyu to heyu, we were permitted to return to our tent, but had to promise to come back in the evening to see the sports and dances of the women and warriors.

Aïto accompanied us, and said that we should see how the Gallas could ride and run and throw the spear and wrestle; and this gave an idea to Hardy, who was a great athlete, that he should show them some tent-pegging, and, if need be, would wrestle with their strongest men.

"Can you do anything in that way, Jock?" he said.

"I can run above a bit," I said. "I won the quarter of a mile in the 'Varsity sports one year, and I can toss the caber; but there are no fir trees here to make one."

"Never mind, we can find a substitute; and you should certainly, if up to 'Varsity form, beat the fastest savage that ever trod."

"Well, I will time the races, and see if I have a chance. You are a giant in strength, and can throw any man we have seen; and the tent-pegging should astonish them, as, though they don't ride badly, I expect some of their horsemen have never seen it tried."

"That's true; but I wish one of us could throw a spear. But I am afraid neither can; it requires a peculiar knack and long practice."

"Why should not Hamees try?" I said.

"Certainly, if he choose; but he must remember he must not be beaten."

I asked Hamees if he could throw a spear, and he said yes, and he could also play at the jereed, but that he doubted if any of the Gallas knew anything of it.

We accordingly arranged our parts, and asked Aïto to tell the heyu that, as now we were his mogasa, we

wished to join in the sports with his men; and Aïto was much delighted at the idea, and said that if we were successful it would add much to our influence and to the respect the Gallas felt for us, and soon came back, saying that the heyu was delighted to hear that we would join in the sports of his people.

At the time appointed we repaired to the neighbourhood of the Woda Baki, and there we found the people all assembled, while a space in the middle was kept clear for the sports, and a course had been prepared for the races.

At first there was some manœuvring of the guards of Saka, who advanced in line and retreated, and wheeled and skirmished with admirable precision, in obedience to the word of command; and this was followed by some of the horsemen showing how they could ride, when Hardy, who was mounted on Askar, said he would challenge them all to do what he would now show them. A tent peg was accordingly driven into the ground, and Hardy sweeping by at full gallop took it out of the ground on the point of his lance. A shout of applause and admiration rose from all the people, and at first no one would attempt to imitate the feat; but when Hardy repeated it two or three times, a couple of young men, who were considered the best horsemen among the Gallâs, said they would try, and, mounting their horses, rode at the peg with their spears. The first missed it altogether; and the second, thinking he would make sure of it, drove his spear into the ground about a foot short of it, and was hurled from his saddle, breaking the shaft of his spear. Neither of them were daunted; but though they tried three or four more times, they were not successful, notwithstanding that Hardy tried to teach them how to hold the spear and aim at the peg.

Next came the wrestling, and here some very good sport was shown, many of the men being very active and powerful; but when Hardy challenged the winner, and, stripping for the contest, displayed his magnificent chest and arms, there could be no doubt of his superiority in strength. Saka, who, though he took all in good part, did not wish his countrymen to be always beaten, here interfered, and said there was one man present who had not yet wrestled, as no one of his countrymen could compete with him, and that if Hardy wished for a worthy antagonist this man would face him.

Hardy at once consented, and a shout went up for Kubla, the mighty wrestler; and in answer to the call, a Galla, fully as tall and large as Hardy, came in to the arena, and stood waiting for his chief's command.

As Hardy looked at him, he whispered to me that it would require all his strength and science to throw this champion of the Gallas. "But there," he said, "I have challenged, and I must not go back from my word."

Kubla and Hardy were soon facing each other, and warily watching for a good grip, and it was fully five minutes before they were fairly locked. The fair skin of my friend contrasted well with the deep bronze of his antagonist, and they strained and struggled, each man standing as firm as some mighty oak. At last I thought Hardy was failing, and was in fear lest he should be overcome; but it was only a feint, and induced the Galla to give him the opening he wanted, for in another moment Hardy, by a skilful cross-buttock, brought him fairly down on his back.

Shouts of astonishment arose from all the Gallas when they saw their countryman's downfall, for hitherto he had been so successful in wrestling that they considered

him invincible. Kubla rose to his feet, assisted by Hardy, and, coming to where Saka was standing, requested permission to try another fall, as he said he felt assured of success in a second attempt.

I remarked that his eyes looked dangerous, and I warned Hardy that he might do something which, though the Gallas might not consider it unfair, would damage him seriously. Hardy only laughed, and said, "I understand his play now, and if he is nasty will give him an ugly fall."

Kubla had, as I thought, lost his temper, and came on at Hardy very viciously; but the latter, being perfectly cool, got hold of him as he liked, and in less than a minute had given him the "flying mare," and laid him on the ground senseless, with blood rushing from his mouth and nostrils. The shouts of applause which followed this feat were mingled with some cries of anger from Kubla's friends, which however were instantly quelled by Saka; and I promised, if Kubla were taken to our tent, that by next morning he should be perfectly well.

After this the other sports took place, and I found that in running I could easily beat their best man, and tossing the caber excited great astonishment. Hamees too, in throwing the spear, was able, though not without great difficulty, to score a victory; and when the sports were concluded, the Heyu Saka and his headmen said that we were worthy to be admitted members of his people, and placed on our heads the caps of leopard skin, ornamented with ostrich feathers, which form the distinguishing mark of their great warriors.

After the sports there was a wodaja, in which we were obliged to take part, and large quantities of beer, mead,

and tobacco were consumed; gourds of a drink resembling tea, called chat, made from the leaves of a small shrub, being handed round at intervals. Many stories were told of love, war, and the chase, and songs were sung by the minstrels, while Tom Hardy gained as much applause by his singing some hunting songs as he had for his exploits in tent-pegging and wrestling.

We thought, though the meeting was interesting, that it was becoming tedious, and asked Aïto if we might retire to our tent, more especially as we had to attend to Kubla, who, Bob came and told us, was recovering consciousness; but Aïto said that the women were going to dance, and that to leave before we had seen it would not be taken well.

Hitherto the only musical instruments which we had seen, if they could be considered as such, were drums and bells; but now a band of girls came in front of where we were sitting, playing on pipes made of reeds, and lyres formed of strings stretched over the shell of a fresh-water turtle, and were accompanied by some boys with small drums and cymbals, with which they joined in the livelier strains.

This band walked round the space in front of us, and then, drawing on one side, the dancers appeared; and for beauty of form or feature, the twenty-one women who were to perform could hardly be matched in any country, and their colour, which was a golden bronze, was, if considered apart from our prejudices, as pleasant to look on as the lilies and roses of our English girls. They all wore wreaths of flowers in their long, curly hair, and ivory and brass bangles on their arms and legs, while their only drapery consisted of coloured scarves over their shoulders, which scarcely veiled their lovely busts, and a

petticoat or kilt of white embroidery, with beads, which reached scarcely to their knees. Five of the dancers had castanets, and these were leaders in the performance which was now to take place, whilst one who was pre-eminent even among her companions for grace and beauty carried a wand ornamented with hawks' bells and feathers.

The *prima ballerina*, as we may call her, advanced alone, and performed a most voluptuous *pas seul*, accompanied by the low and sweet music; and then, suddenly striking her wand on the ground, the strain changed to a lively measure, and, all the drums and cymbals joining, the remainder of the dancers sprang forward, and a dance with complicated figures and much waving of arms and bending of bodies commenced, in which the chief dancer, and those with castanets, took principal parts, the whole effect being decidedly artistic, and different from the clumsy, monotonous performances which seem to give so much pleasure to the inhabitants of other parts of Africa.

When the dance was over and the dancers rewarded, Saka asked if in our country we ever had dances of the same kind, and I explained, as well as I could, how in our opera houses and theatres we had *ballets*, which were something of the same sort. Saka was much struck with the idea of our having houses devoted to music and dancing, which would hold thousands of people, but asked why, when it was so much more pleasant to sit in the open air, we should go to the trouble of building them, and was loud in his expressions of pity when he was told that our climate was so bad that it was almost impossible to hold such gatherings in the open air.

The women, headed by their band, having withdrawn, I asked if the men among the Gallas never danced; and Saka called for four young warriors, who gave a sort of

war dance, which in its way was as striking as that of the women; and when they were finished, he asked if we could not show him something of how our men danced for he said warriors should know how to dance as well as to fight, or they would never win the hearts of women.

I whispered to Hardy and Hamees, to ask if I should try my hand at a sword dance, and as they both agreed it might be well, I went to our tent, and, putting on a Highland dress which I had among my kit, I returned, and to the best of my ability went through one, which was much admired, while the dress was considered as a most fitting one for a warrior.

By this time it was nearly sunset, and the meeting broke up, Saka telling us that on the following morning we would commence our march through his country towards a wild tract which lay between it and the frontiers of the country ruled over by the great queen.

On arriving at our tent, we found Kubla sitting up and apparently little the worse for his fall; so we had not to resort to any of our mysterious means to complete his cure, but, giving him a stiff glass of grog, which he seemed to relish very much, sent him back to his friends, swearing that if the white men were strong, it was no wonder when they had such marvellous mead to drink.

CHAPTER XII.

EARLY in the morning the camp broke up, and large numbers of the people went off towards their own homes, there only remaining with Saka his cavalry and personal guards, and the people whose villages lay on our line of march.

The chief of each party came to make a formal leave-taking of Saka before he left, and it was nearly ten o'clock before he told us he was ready to march himself. All our belongings were now put on donkeys driven by women, to whom fall all such work among the Gallas. We were accompanied by Saka and Aïto, who were both mounted, and the cavalry led the way, Hamees and Bob riding the two Aden horses, and the latter leading the greyhounds in a leash, while Havana trotted by my side, evidently wondering at the strange people among whom he found himself.

Our road led at first through a well-wooded country, with numerous streams, and evidently a home for much game, and giving promise of good sport. Nor were we disappointed, for before we had gone five miles Hamees pointed out to Hardy and myself a herd of seven elephants feeding on the branches of a clump of trees a mile away in front. "Come, Jock," said Hardy, "you have never shot an elephant. Here is a chance of doing it, and showing these Gallas that we can do something in the chase as well as in games."

Aïto, who was riding by us, saw the elephants as well

as we did, and said what a pity it was that there would be no chance of surrounding them and spearing them, which was the usual method employed by the Gallas to kill them, and that among the horsemen with us there were none who were practised in riding after them and hamstringing them, as was sometimes done.

"Tell the heyu," I said, "that his mogasa will go after the elephants, and see if they cannot kill some."

"What! will my friends hamstring them? They cannot do it without risk, and if they are killed they will never find their brother and take him back to their own country."

"No, Aïto; we will shoot them from our saddles. Tell the heyu to halt his men here, and watch while we get as close to the elephants as we can without disturbing them."

"I will tell the Heyu Saka what you propose; but an elephant is a big brute, and though I know a bullet can kill a lion or a man, it is a small thing to kill an elephant; and your horses will be frightened, so that you will not be able to take a good aim."

"Never mind; we can but try, and our horses are well-trained. You will see that they will not be frightened."

Saka, on being told of our design, halted his men, and ordered them to dismount and conceal themselves and their horses behind some bushes which grew near, so that they might not frighten the elephants, which up to this had not perceived us.

Hardy and I looked well to our girths and stirrups, and making a sweep round to the left, so as to take advantage of the shelter of some trees which grew in that direction, and the wind luckily favouring us, we got within two hundred yards of the elephants without being seen by them.

As soon as they saw us, a large tusker, which was

evidently the leader of the herd, threw up his trunk and trumpeted shrilly, and the others closed in round two of them which had calves by their sides, hustling them into the middle of the group; but none attempted flight, but all stood facing us and looking as if they meant mischief.

"What shall we do?" said Hardy to me. "I had calculated on their bolting, and our being able to take them singly. See! we cannot get a shoulder shot at one of them, and that is the only one on which any dependence can be placed with an African elephant."

I answered: "I'm sure I don't know. Let us ride round and round them; they may get puzzled and break up the group, and then we may get a chance at them in detail. Or why not fire at the head of the big one? and if he is wounded he may charge and lay his flank open."

"Wounding unnecessarily is not sportsmanlike. We will ride past them, and see if we can tempt them to charge."

"All right. I'll lead, and you come after me; or you go first—as you like."

"As you are the lighter of the two, perhaps you will lead on. Why, here is Havana with us. Did not you leave him behind?"

"No; I quite forgot him. What can we do with him?"

"He must take his chance now, and as elephants are notoriously afraid of dogs, he may be of some use. Now, are you ready? I will come fifteen yards behind you."

"Right." And shoving my spurs into Sheikh, whom I was riding, I went off at full gallop towards the elephants, which seemed much astonished. As I passed them they remained still, and Hardy, who was following me, but at a slower pace, did not get a chance of a shot; but just as he passed, the bull, the leader of the herd, rushed for-

ward and seized him in his trunk, dragging him out of his saddle. I heard him shout out, and looking round saw what had happened, and his horse, Askar, riderless. I instantly turned Sheikh round, and getting my rifle ready was making to my friend's assistance, whom the elephant was swinging in his trunk as if in doubt what to do with him, when suddenly I saw Havana spring at the elephant and seize him by the trunk. He instantly dropped Hardy, and, trumpeting in pain and rage, wheeled sharp round, and commenced to lumber away, followed by the rest of the herd.

I pulled my horse up, and jumped off to pick up Hardy, whom I expected to find either dead or seriously injured, when, to my amazement, I saw him get on his feet, and, after passing his hand over his body and limbs, declare himself uninjured. "Faith," he said, "I thought it was a case with me; but I had a shrewder grip from that fellow Kubla yesterday. But now we must not let the brutes get away. Here! good dog Havana; you saved my life." And then whistling to Askar, he picked up his rifle and jumped on his back, while I remounted Sheikh.

It was now a case of hard riding to catch the elephants up; but in time we came up with them, and Hardy, who was leading, ranging up on the right side of the big elephant, fired his rifle into his side behind the shoulder from a distance of about two feet; and the bullet traversing the lungs and heart, the huge brute gave a convulsive plunge and pitched forward dead, burying his tusks in the ground.

"There! you won't treat me to a swing again," said Hardy. "Now, Jock, ride for yours; I will keep behind, ready to come in if you are in danger."

I needed no words to urge me on, and Sheikh, who

fully shared my ardour, straining every nerve, I was soon alongside another bull, which, if it had not been for its being eclipsed by the size of the one Hardy had killed, would have been considered a monster. Unfortunately I had been obliged to come up on his left side, and could not turn sufficiently towards him to fire at right angles into his body, and had therefore to fire diagonally. As the animal felt the bullet he stopped dead short, and wheeled sharp upon me, so that it was only by almost throwing Sheikh on his haunches that I avoided running into him. Turning to the right I managed to pass close behind him, and then rode up on his right side, and was able to put in a shoulder shot with accuracy; but, though mortally wounded, the elephant started off again, and ran for some hundred and fifty yards before falling dead. By this time the rest of the herd were some distance off, and as they were only cows and calves we did not think it worth while to go after them, but rode back to where we had left the Gallas, and were met by them coming at a gallop to congratulate us on our success, though Hamees told us his heart had been in his mouth when he saw Hardy dragged off his horse by the elephant.

Some of the Gallas went to where the elephants were lying to cut out the tusks, which we told Saka were the gifts of his mogasa to their heyu, and others rode back to tell the people on foot of the good fortune which awaited them in a plentiful supply of meat.

Saka now gave orders to halt, and we camped by a small stream, and pitched our tent under the branches of a spreading tree; and then had to give a full description to Saka of how we had fared with the elephants; and he said he had never before heard of a man being seized by

an elephant and escaping with his life, but that, now we had shown how we killed elephants, he hoped we should run no more risks; and that never had he heard of a man after such a risk as Hardy's going immediately after the animal from which he had so narrowly escaped; while as for Havana, he said he had never even dreamt of such a dog. Next morning, as we were anxious to get on and reach the end of our journey quickly, Saka consented to come on with his horsemen, and the women driving the donkeys with our baggage, and not stay by the elephants for his people to eat meat.

We soon commenced to leave the trees behind, and came upon a large grassy plain, in which were marshy spots, from which we startled several wild pig; and at last Hardy could no longer resist the temptation when a large boar sprang up almost under his horse's feet, but, taking his spear from Bob, who was carrying it, rode after it; and I followed him, and after an exciting chase, in which Saka, Aïto, and many of the Gallas joined, though their ponies had no chance against our Arabs, the boar was speared, and as Saka said it was a great delicacy to his people, the body was soon cut up and distributed among them. Although there was but little shade, we were by this time so high above the sea that we felt no inconvenience from the sun; and hares being plentiful, we had many capital courses after them, with Schelhar and Nimshi; and the Gallas, to whom this form of sport was quite new, were delighted with the fun.

As these chases took us often out of the road, which the women with the donkeys steadily pursued, they reached our camping place as soon as we did, and we found that everything had been most carefully looked after; indeed they were much more satisfactory as drivers

of pack animals than the people we had brought from Marka, and who had left us at Gananeh.

Our next two days' march passed without incident, and towards the afternoon of the second we came upon herds of cattle, sheep, and goats, tended by women; and soon after on cultivated ground, where we were astonished to see Galla men at work, as we had thought that in Africa all work in the fields was left to slaves and women; but Aïto told us that in Orma agriculture was always the task of the men, and the women, contrary to the usual custom among semi-pastoral people, attended exclusively to the animals.

We halted for this night at a permanent village, composed of round huts, with stone walls and conical, thatched roofs, and the one which was placed at our disposal was a model of neatness and cleanliness. The people of the village all seemed rejoiced to see their heyu and his mogasa, and the women brought us plentiful supplies of milk, cheese, and flour. On the morrow we were told we should arrive at Doeru, the town of Saka, where he would remain; but donkeys, and women to drive them, would be provided for our baggage, and an escort of cavalry to take us into the part of the country ruled by Aïto's brother Bala, which commenced two days' journey beyond. All the next day we were constantly passing more villages, and at last, on coming to the summit of a small hill, we saw before us the town of Doeru, which was built on the shores of a small lake of the same name, covered with wooded islands, whilst near the town were groves of trees, which for the last three days had been very scarce.

As we drew near to the town we could see that it was surrounded by a stone wall on all sides, except where it was bordered by the lake, and that there were three gates,

all flanked by low towers, and from the gate which we were approaching a procession was coming out to meet us.

When the head of the procession, which was composed of the elders of Doeru and their attendants, arrived within about fifty yards of our party it halted, and we likewise drew up; while Saka, going out by himself, received, at the hands of the man to whose charge it had been entrusted, a pair of white pigeons, symbolical of their having been no crime during his absence, which he liberated, and bread, salt, and water, as token of submission and welcome. As soon as he had tasted each of these we moved on again, and the people who had come out to meet us joining with us we soon entered the town, which we found was well laid out in broad streets, and kept scrupulously clean. The houses were like those which we had seen in the villages we had passed, but larger and better built; and in the centre of the town, surrounded by another wall, inside which were the houses of Saka and his wives, and some of the headmen, was a large building, with walls nearly twenty feet high, and a hundred feet long by fifty wide, the roof of which was supported on wooden pillars, and in the centre of this was an iron pillar ten feet high, with capital and base of the same metal, covered over with symbolical signs, which we were told was of an unknown age, and was considered the most sacred possession of the Gallas, and that the branch ruled over by Saka were considered to be superior to their fellow-countrymen on account of its being situated in their principal town.

This pillar was always watched day and night by two lubas and two kalijas, the latter having charge of a sacred serpent, a species of python, which lay coiled on a mat in front of it. Looking at this pillar, we saw that the emblems with which it was covered were decidedly of a

masonic character, and full of meaning to Hardy, Hamees, and myself as masons, but the nature of which I am forbidden by the spirit of the craft to disclose; but we found that to those in charge of it they bore no meaning, and all they could say was that in days long past it had been delivered to the keeping of the Gallas, with the charge that as long as they kept it safe and free from harm they would prosper, but that if they neglected it all kinds of evils would befall them.

Examining it carefully, we saw that it was hollow, and pressing on a projecting knob, a door in the side opened, and inside was a small parchment packet, on which was some writing in Hebrew characters, and inside which was a golden key. The writing was by a pupil of Hiram, the builder of the temple, and said that he had made this pillar as a memorial of the temple for a present to the queen of Sheba, and that the key was sent by Solomon to that monarch after she returned to her own country.

When it was seen that we had opened the pillar, the lubas and kalijas were loud in their outcries against us, and clamoured that we should at once be put to death; and many of those who had been most friendly with us on the road now approached with no friendly gestures, and even Saka and Aïto seemed to be yielding to the clamour of the priests and sorcerers.

I saw that not a moment was to be lost, and approaching Saka, said, "O heyu, may it be permitted that we should speak? and may Aïto proclaim our words to those who are present?"

Loud cries from the people in the building, which by this time was full of excited men, and from the women outside, were raised against our being allowed to plead in

our defence, and the lubas demanded that we should be bound and taken to an island in the lake, there to be offered to Oglie, who was supposed to specially protect the town of Doeru.

Fortunately for us, Saka refused to listen to their clamour, and gave permission for our words to be made known to the people.

CHAPTER XIII.

Aïro, though he did not seem to care about the business, consented to act as interpreter, and after hasty consultation with Hardy and Hamees, I spoke as follows:

"O heyu, and you the men of Orma, why are your hearts angry against us? For many years this pillar has been among you, and you have been ignorant of its meaning, and of what it contained. What harm has been done to the pillar? Are ye angry that men having knowledge and wisdom have discovered its secret? Know ye, that the same men who made that pillar have transmitted their wisdom to others; and through many ages, from man to man, and from generation to generation, their wisdom and knowledge have been handed on, and that we who stand here are among those to whom the custody of that knowledge is confided. This I may say to you, O heyu, and ye, ye men of Orma, if you put one hand on us, who are the mogasa of your heyu, that the same spirit, who, whilst ye have cared for the keeping of that pillar, has brought you prosperity, will punish you, and grave evils will befall you. If we were desirous of harming you, why do we bring back Aïto your friend from slavery? why do we trust ourselves among you? What man can say that evil has been found in our hands since the day that I told Aïto I would restore him to his people? Are not these words the words of truth? Rather than offer us up to your god, ye should be proud that ye who are now present have lived to see the pillar opened."

This harangue, which was duly translated by Aïto, seemed to produce a good effect, and one of the lubas, rising to his feet, said: "The words of the stranger are good; the knowledge of the pillar is marvellous. Now, ye men of Orma, retire, and let the strangers speak to the guardians of the pillar the things concerning it."

The two kalijas, however, did not agree, and said: "The strangers are sar, and would rob the pillar of its virtues. Seize them, lest they by their forked tongues prevail on the guardians of the pillar to neglect their sacred trust." And both came forward to lay hands on us, but as they did so the sacred serpent arose from its lair, and, coiling itself round the more violent of the two, squeezed him to death.

"See, O Gallas," I said, "the snake has known who are good and who are evil, and has prevented you from committing a crime, and violating the persons of the mogasa of your heyu. Listen to the words of your priest, which are words of wisdom."

The sight of the sudden death of the kalija, whose body now lay on the ground encircled with the coils of the python, and the words of the luba and myself, prevailed. And Saka, lifting up his voice, cried out, "Every man to his hut, while the guardians of the pillar and the strangers talk together!"

In a moment the building was cleared, and we found ourselves alone with the two lubas, and the dead and the living kalija, from the former of which the snake slowly untwisted himself and retired to his usual resting-place. His companion fell on his knees and begged our pardon and mercy, for he said he had only followed the words and actions of the dead man, whom by his oath he was bound to obey.

We assured him that nothing should happen to him if he profited by the example he had received; and then we told to the lubas what we had read on the paper, and Hamees added that doubtless the pillar was under the charge of one of the genii who obeyed the orders of Solomon, of whom the lubas had some dim and misty knowledge, and that the afrit, as long as the pillar was kept carefully, would extend his protection to the town of Doeru, but that for greater safety and privacy it would be better that the pillar should be taken to one of the islands on the lake.

I wondered at Hamees saying this, and still more when the principal of the two lubas said: "How does the stranger know that for many years the pillar was on one of the islands? But the priests of Oglie said that the island was sacred to him, and that therefore the pillar should be put in the town. We who guard the pillar resisted, but the people said, 'Oglie is a god, and this, though it be sacred, but a piece of iron'; and the priests of Oglie prevailed, and the pillar was brought here five rainy seasons ago.

"The same day that it was moved the heyu died, in whose place Saka was elected. Then hailstones destroyed our crops, and locusts ate up what the hailstones left, and many of our men have died; and Aïto, who is the brother of the heyu of our brethren, has been a captive. We will listen to the words of the strangers."

The lubas now rang a bell which was fixed in a turret at one corner of the building, and all the men of Doeru, headed by Saka, appeared. By the time they came back we had closed the pillar, and without thinking I had put the key and the parchment in my pocket, where they remained unnoticed for some time. The lubas said

that they had spoken with us, and that we were good, and had nothing to do with the sar, and had told them wonderful things, and among others that the pillar was to be restored to its place on the island, and that (which was going beyond what we had said) unless this was done the next day Saka would die, and that disputes would arise in the election of his successor, which would cause many to lose their lives.

The lubas who were devoted to the service of Oglie at first demurred, and it was not till the guardians of the pillar threatened them with the fate of the kalija who had shown himself hostile to us, that they withdrew their opposition; and Saka, in accordance with the demand, gave orders that the boat, which had been built to bring the pillar from the island to the mainland, should be got ready, and that all the canoes on the lake should be mustered in readiness to attend the transference of the pillar to its old place.

By this time it was growing late, and I said to Hardy, as we were preparing for the night: "Tom, it's curious, isn't it, this pillar and masonry here? I suppose this country we are on the track of is really that of the queen of Sheba?"

"Why, it must be; it can be no other. But I wonder how it is it has been shut off from all communication with the outer world during historical times."

"It is all mysterious—Hamees and his friend at Cairo, the Rabbi's charms, which certainly work, the writing of Trevelyan; we cannot understand anything, and it is best to take it all as it comes. We have pulled through our scrapes hitherto, and there is no reason, if we stick together, why we should not pull through them again. By the way"—as I emptied my pockets before turning

in,—"here is this key; I forgot to put it back. What must I do with it?"

"Oh, keep it for the night, and then put it back in the morning; that will be best."

"Good-night."

"Good-night," answered Hardy, and we were soon both asleep. In my sleep I again dreamed that I saw Trevelyan in white robes and with his wand in his hand, and he said to me: "The key which you have this day found is the key which gives entrance to the most wonderful thing in the country you will visit; guard it with your life, and use it when the time comes. Delay not on your road, but press forward, for the time approaches when you must appear before the queen, if you are to prove successful." With these words, he faded away from my sight, and then I dreamed no more until I awoke in the morning; and on telling Hardy my dream, he said:

"Keep the key by all means; but have you looked to see if Trevelyan has written anything for you?"

"Not yet; but I will now at once."

Opening my pocket-book again where I had found Trevelyan's other messages, I found written: "The key insures your success; guard it with your life."

"All right, Tom; he has written"—and I read out the sentence; "and now we must see about getting on our road. Hamees, will you call Aïto, and ask him when we can start? I hear the drums beating, so I suppose they are getting ready to move the pillar, and we may start directly after that."

As I finished speaking, Aïto came in and said our presence was desired to witness the removal of the pillar, all being now prepared. We at once hurried with our

dressing, and told Aïto that that same afternoon we were going to start, and relied on him to be ready.

"Ah, my masters, ye tell Aïto to hurry! There is no need to tell him. My wife and my daughter await me, and my heart yearns for them, for they must have mourned for me as one dead; for is not to be a slave worse than death? Aïto will fly to his people if my masters will keep up with him."

"That is enough. Lead on to where the pillar is."

On arriving at the house where the pillar was erected, we found Saka and all his people assembled around it, and a species of litter, borne by twelve men, ready, on which to put the pillar. When we came up, Saka and these men, with all the guardians of the pillar, entered the house with us, and the pillar was carefully placed on the litter, which was then raised on the bearers' shoulders and carried to the water's edge, preceded by girls and women singing and dancing and strewing flowers and green branches on the ground, and followed by the lubas and kalijas, who were accompanied by the snake which had executed such summary justice the night before. Behind these came Saka and his councillors, with whom we walked, and then the great mass of the people.

The boat which had been prepared for the pillar was a huge craft made of one log, over eighty feet in length and seven feet in beam, with a carved and projecting prow, and manned by thirty paddlers, and was painted a bright red. Amidships was a platform, on which the pillar was placed, and the carriers stood around.

The lubas and kalijas had two canoes of forty feet long appropriated to them, painted white, while Saka's state barge, in which we, Hamees, and Aïto were accommodated, was sixty feet long, and most highly ornamented

and painted in various colours. Canoes of all sorts and sizes followed us, and, after half an hour's paddling, we arrived at the island where the pillar had originally been placed, and were astonished to find a quay, with broad steps of hewn stone, which could not have been constructed by the Gallas with their present appliances; nor was our astonishment lessened when, on landing and proceeding a short distance along a path through thick woods, we came upon an open clearing, in the centre of which was a stone building, evidently of immense age, but of great beauty and in good preservation. In front of this building was a stone altar, with four projecting horns of iron, one at each corner; and when, with all ceremony, the pillar had been restored to its old place, we saw what these horns were intended for, for two men were suddenly brought forward, and one of them was thrown on his back on the altar and his wrists and ankles lashed to the horns, whilst the chief of the lubas, baring a sacrificial knife, prepared to take his life.

The whole thing had been done so quickly that we had not time to interfere; but I and Hardy both sprang forward and, seizing the luba, prevented him carrying out his barbarous intentions. A great outcry arose, for we had baulked the people of one of their best-liked exhibitions—a human sacrifice; but though Saka and Aïto both begged us to allow the sacrifice to be completed, we at all risks determined to prevent, and, drawing our revolvers, swore we would shoot the first man who interfered with us or with Hamees, who by our orders cut the ropes which bound the intended victim to the altar. And then I said:

"O ye men of Orma, what is this that I find among you? Ye think to please a god—be he your Waka or

Oglie, or the great and pure God, whose servant made this pillar—by bloodshed. Gods love not cruelty nor bloodshed. We have brought with us Aïto, who was a slave, and now is free, and we are mogasa of your heyu. Release these two men, and let them come with us as servants, and it will be well with you; but if ye kill them, the spirit of the pillar will cause evil to befall you."

After much discussion the two prisoners were allowed to go with us, and when we came to look at them closely we found that they were not Gallas, but of a lighter colour and different features, and to our disgust and horror found that they were mutes, their tongues having been torn out.

The moment we were in our hut, Hamees said: "We must move on. We have done many things against the Gallas, and now we have prevented them from shedding the blood of defenceless men they will not forgive us; and though Saka and Aïto may wish to be good to us, there are many others, and specially among the friends of the lubas who serve Oglie, and of the kalija whom the snake killed, who would willingly kill us. Now they have had no time to consult and to plot, but soon they will have a plan. Let us go while we have the power."

"What Hamees says is very true," said Hardy. "These two dumb fellows will be useful to us, for, as soon as we pass through Aïto's country, Bob will be the only servant, and he has to look after the animals. These fellows must know that we saved their lives, and they will be sure to stop with us."

"Yes; but here comes Aïto. Now, Aito, we must start now; are you ready?"

"I am ready; but my masters must say farewell to Saka and his councillors; they await you now."

"Good, Aïto. Hamees, load the donkeys, and we will see them on the way, and then we will mount our horses and say 'Good-bye' from their backs."

"The words of the master are good," said Hamees. And we soon had all our belongings outside the town, and, leaving them in charge of Bob, we, with our two new retainers, whom we dared not leave by themselves among the Gallas, rode to the council-house, and bid farewell to Saka, whom we thanked for his great kindnesses, but whom we warned that he would encounter many and fearful calamities unless he put an end to the practice of sacrificing human beings.

He pressed us to remain with him longer, but we urged that we had much to do, and our journey was long, and that we could not delay; and so at length, rising from his seat, he bid us begone in peace, and wished us success in all our undertakings.

We were not slow in availing ourselves of his permission to depart, and soon overtook our donkeys and their drivers; and, there being a good moon, we pushed on that night till past ten o'clock, and arrived nearly at the limit of the villages surrounding Doeru on that side.

Next morning, as we were starting, some of the people from the villages near came to our camp and wished to hinder our departure, and, notwithstanding all the arguments of Aïto and our excessive forbearance, we could not prevail upon them to leave us in peace until Hardy had given one or two of the most troublesome a sound thrashing with a hide-whip which he wrested from one of them, who was excessively insolent.

The women who were driving our donkeys were undecided what to do. They and the men who were to escort them back to Doeru feared to return to Saka without

having fulfilled his commands, and at the same time they were fearful of quarrelling with their neighbours who had been annoying us.

In this plight I prevailed upon Aïto to get his men to drive the donkeys, and giving value in beads and cowries for them to the women, we sent all Saka's people back, and proceeded on our way, certainly with lightened burdens if not with very light hearts; for now in a few days we knew we should be left, even by Aïto and these men we had rescued from slavery, and then how were we to get on? Our two selves and Hamees, the boy Bob, who was a good lad, but knew nothing of cooking or anything, and the two mutes, whom we certainly could not understand, and whom we were very doubtful if they could understand us, would be all the party.

"Never mind, Jock," said Hardy when I said this; "we must win through. You have a key, a case, and charms, and Hamees there has enough uncanny knowledge for any man: I doubt not that we shall succeed."

CHAPTER XIV.

Our next three days' travel lay altogether through a waste country, in which were the borders of the territories of the heyus Saka and Bala, where we found abundance of game and water, and where, on the summits of the hills, we found heather and plants which reminded me of the Scottish Highlands, and where the nights were so cold, that we put on all the covering we could and our followers made huge fires to sleep by.

At last we commenced to come down again, and soon began to find villages; and in the first of these, Aïto found some of his brother's people, who instantly set off to apprise Bala of the news of his brother's freedom and return.

Next day Bala, who had hurried to meet us, arrived at our camp just after we had halted, and welcomed Aïto back to his country as one risen from the dead, and wished us to accompany him to his capital to witness the feasts and rejoicings in honour of Aïto's return.

As this would have entailed our lengthening our march considerably, we excused ourselves from complying, and only asked for guides and assistance as far as the frontier of the queen's country.

"Ah!" said Bala, "ye strangers have brought my brother back, and I would do much for you to show my gratitude, but that is not in my power. The nearest way to the queen's country lies through valleys full of morasses and marsh, and infested by wild beasts and venomous

serpents; and beyond the forest is thick, and it is peopled by dwarfs who are as hot as fire, and who have arrows which are poisoned, and they are so many and so small that no men can escape them."

"Nevertheless, Bala, we must go; we will pass through your country, and then we will face the swamps, the serpents, and the dwarfs. You know that we turn not back until our purpose is accomplished, and we have seen the queen and released my brother from slavery," said Hardy.

"O white men," said Bala, "listen to my words, they are words of wisdom and of friendship. Ye have restored my brother, the son of my father and the son of my mother, to me, and I would do all for you, but I cannot send men into the valley of serpents or into the country of dwarfs. If ye must go to the country of the queen there is a road, but a long one, by which ye may pass through my country and the countries of other tribes of Gallas, and after two moons ye may come to the country of the queen."

"True, Bala, your words may be wise; but say unto us how many days are necessary to pass the valley of the serpents; and if it has not been passed, how knowest thou that there is a country of dwarfs beyond?"

"To cross the valley of serpents needs a stout heart, and may be done in two days; and men verily have crossed, but they had amulets against the snakes, and kalijas were with them who charmed the snakes."

"We need neither amulets nor kalijas, O Bala. And have we not stout hearts? He who has told you that we lack in courage is a liar; our friend Aïto knows that fear cometh not to us."

"True, Bala has spoken, and if his friends desire to go

into the valley of serpents there is no man who obeys Bala who will hinder them."

We found that another three days would bring us to the boundary of Bala's territory, on the side towards the much-dreaded valley of serpents, and so far he and Aïto and many of their friends accompanied us, but not one step farther would any Galla move, as they said the descent into the valley of serpents was certain death. But when asked if he would go with us, Bob said: "What good for no go? S'pose Bob stay here, no master, plenty soon be slave, plenty soon die. S'pose Bob die with master, that better than die here."

"All right, Bob, my boy," I said; "you shan't die if I can help it. Now, Hardy, we must make our dumb men understand, if we can, where we are going."

In our most expressive pantomime, and by aid of one or two sketches, we made them understand where we were going, and had the pleasure of seeing their ordinarily immobile features relax into a smile.

Soon after, one of them went through the pantomime of shooting with a bow and arrow and being wounded and dying, and then held his hand about three feet six inches from the ground, as if to point to that being the height of the people who shot the arrows; and then he and his companion got a couple of hides, and placing them on sticks walked between, so as to show that in that way we might pass through these people without injury. We instantly understood his idea, and with bamboos, hides, and canes we made a species of portable fence for our horses, dogs, and ourselves, and four of the donkeys, which could be carried on our shoulders or slung on the animals' backs. The rest of the donkeys we determined to let run their chance, and indeed from what we

had heard of the mud and snakes we would have to pass through, we doubted much if we would not lose many of our animals before we got to the dwarfs' country. When Aïto and Bala saw our fortification, they said it was good for the arrows of the Akas, as the dwarfs were called, but that from the snakes there would be no protection.

"The snakes and the swamps seem to be our great trouble at present," said Hardy. "I wonder if one of these kalijas could be prevailed to come with us, or if he won't, to let us into some of their secrets about charms and antidotes."

Hamees, who took part in all our discussions, agreed that this would be a good plan, and we asked Bala if he had no one among his men who was a kalija, and who could use his skill to assist us on our journey. He said that there were two kalijas in a village an hour's journey from where we were then, and he would send for them, but that it was very doubtful if they would either of them go with us.

"Never mind, O heyu," I said; "send for these men, and we will speak with them, and perchance they will make known to us the remedies that they use against the fangs of the snakes, and provided with these, we will make our way through the valley of serpents."

"O friend and deliverer of my brother," he replied, "I will send for these men; but that they will impart their secrets unto you, you cannot hope, for they are a mystery of their calling, and are handed down from father to son, and none of those who are not kalijas and have power over the sar and over serpents among the Gallas have been permitted to have knowledge of them, and even to me, their heyu, they will tell nothing."

"Nevertheless we would see them, and speak with them, and perchance we may learn something which will be of use to us in our travels."

"Verily, my friends, I will command their attendance. Before the sun reaches yonder tree they shall be here."

Hardy and I now looked among our medicines to see what remedies we might have which were considered of use against snake bites, and packed in a small box, which one of us could always carry, aquafortis and caustic; and one of us remembering that if a man could be made drunk he would suffer no ill effects from the bite of a snake, we divided among us our few remaining bottles of whisky, which gave each of us, including Bob and the two mutes, two, and left one, which we had open for use, over. These we packed very carefully, so that they should not get broken, and when we made the mutes by signs understand what they were intended for they nodded their heads in token of approval.

At the time mentioned the kalijas arrived, and refused at once and steadfastly to go an inch beyond their own frontier, as their power, they said, was only given to them to exercise in the land of the Gallas, and that the sar and serpents which they would meet beyond it would not be subject to their authority. The valley of serpents they said, indeed, was filled with snakes, which had been expelled from Galla-land, which there had found a refuge; and it was handed down from olden times that any kalija who entered it would, not only be powerless over the snakes that were there, but would also lose all his power in his own country. True it was that some kalijas were reported to have passed through, but they were men of exceptional power and sanctity.

"But," said Hamees, "have you no medicines for the bites of snakes which prevent a man from dying when he is bitten by one?"

"We have, master, but only a small quantity, and they are not to be obtained easily; and what is good for one snake is useless for another."

"We will make you rich beyond all kalijas if you will sell us your medicines."

"No, strangers, we may not sell them; we may use them, but not sell them."

"We will not only give you beads and cloth and wire to delight your wives, but we will give you weapons of the white men, which are more powerful than sword or spear."

The hope of possessing a gun apiece at last bribed the kalijas to give us some roots and herbs, which they explained were remedies for the bites of different kinds of snakes. The quantity they gave us was very small, but we were fain to content ourselves with it, as it was all they had, and no more was to be obtained either for love or for merchandise.

The kalijas, when they had sold us their medicines, said, "Now, white men, friends of our chief and deliverers of Aïto, ye have been generous unto us, and we will tell you that besides these medicines, fire and the knife must be used when a serpent wounds you, and also that if ye are fortunate ye may meet in the valley of serpents a toad, in whose head is a stone, which if it be applied to the bite of a serpent will extract the venom therefrom; and again, when ye have passed through the first half of the valley, ye will arrive at a huge tree, bigger than the Woda Baki, and that by this tree resides the king of the snakes. He is as white as milk, and round his neck is a circle of yellow

metal, in which are stones that are brighter than any of the beads ye bring from the white man's country. If ye can capture him, ye will be safe, for he will prevent his subjects from harming you for fear of injury being done to himself. And the manner in which you must entrap him is this. Ye will make of canes a cage, and in this cage there must be a bowl of milk, and when the king of the snakes sees the milk, he will enter into the cage to drink it, and the cage must be closed; but he that closes it must use stratagem, for the king of the snakes, if he sees or hears a man, will quit the cage, and his movements are more rapid than lightning for swiftness."

"Do you believe that there is a king of the snakes?" I said.

"Believe! Do we believe that we live? do we believe that we drink? do we believe in Waka, Oglie, and Atetie? do we believe in the sar? We not only believe, but we know, and more, there have been men among the kalijas who have seen him, and many, many years ago, more years than we can number, a man who would visit the country of the queen, where ye now purpose to go, trapped the king of the snakes in a cage; but after he had trapped him, he was careless, and suffered him to escape; and when the king had escaped, he went away, and after four days he returned with an army of snakes, and they fell on that man and his companions and killed them all save one, who returned to the country of the Gallas and related what had befallen those who travelled with him."

"If we capture the king of the snakes, will he be obedient to us?"

"O white men, ye will not believe the king of the snakes commands all the snakes in the world; and if ye wish, while he is in your power, they will attack your

enemies. Every year we place on the borders of the valley of serpents a lamb, white and without spots, a white fowl, and thirteen eggs; and the king of the snakes commands those who live in our land to be obedient to us."

"Now, Tom," I said to Hardy, "do you believe this story, or is it a cock-and-bull yarn? King of snakes, indeed!"

"I don't know, Jock; I have an open mind, and after what has happened to us already I am inclined to believe everything. I think we had better make the cage, and I dare say a tin of preserved milk will do for the bait, and if we put some laudanum in his majesty will get drowsy after drinking."

"Well, we will make the cage, and if we come across the animal we will try to trap him; but we can easily fit a falling door with a cage so that we can close it from a distance."

By this time it was nearly sunset, and the kalijas bade us farewell, saying that they must return to their village before sunset. As soon as the kalijas had left we set to work and made our cage, and then, everything being ready for our start in the morning, we lay down to sleep.

For three days we marched across a fair and fertile country, where there were many villages and much cattle; and on the evening of the third day we saw, a short distance before us, a thick and tangled jungle, and through this we were told our path led. We again overhauled all our loads, and leaving some stores in charge of Bala and Aïto in case we should have to retrace our steps, we made all ready for entering into the valley of the snakes, and armed ourselves with long flexible wands, with which to beat them off when they should attack us.

Hardy and I were mounted on Askar and Sheikh,

Hamees and Bob rode the other two horses, while the two mutes each rode a donkey, and each one of the whole party took charge of three baggage donkeys.

Aïto and Bala and a few other Gallas accompanied us to the commencement of the jungle, and then bade us farewell, for not one step into it would any one of them venture.

At the last moment, Aïto tried by all the means in his power to dissuade us from proceeding any farther, and kneeling down and clasping my knees, said: "O my friends, my benefactors, listen to Aïto. Aïto would die for you if it would advantage you, for have you not restored me to my own people and my country when I was a slave? Kindness I have received at your hands, and I would repay it with kindness. Ye are brave and mighty warriors, among all the nation of the Gallas there are none like unto you. Go not to the death that awaits you among the snakes and the dwarfs, but remain and rule over us, and teach us the knowledge of the white men, and the Gallas will become a mighty nation. Go not unto death, my friends."

Neither his pleading nor that of Bala, who added his entreaties to his brother's, would move us from our purpose, and we set forward, and in a few minutes were threading the dark and tangled jungle, which was so thick that the rays of the sun could not penetrate it, and all around seemed weird and gloomy. Creepers and rattans bound the trees together, and the narrow track, which we had to follow, was often so obstructed by them that we had to dismount from our steeds and clear the way with hatchets and knives.

CHAPTER XV.

As we proceeded the way became darker and more toilsome, and soon the path, which was at first distinctly traceable, became more and more faint, until at last we had to trust to our compasses for the direction in which we made our road, while the ground became miry and swampy. Soon we had to give up all idea of riding, and devote our whole energies to cutting away the creepers and leaves which impeded us, and to assisting our animals, which found a difficulty in maintaining their footing in the dark and fœtid mud which now formed the surface of the ground.

After two hours of hard work we halted for a rest, and I said to Hardy: "Certainly they have not exaggerated the difficulties of the road, but fortunately we have not come across any of the snakes yet. I hope they won't be as bad as was said, for in some places we should have no chance whatever in defending ourselves against them."

Scarcely had I spoken when Nimshi, the greyhound, gave a yell and rolled on the ground in convulsions, and springing to our feet we discovered that we were surrounded by snakes. In the trees and on the ground, in every direction, snakes were swarming on us. We beat them down with our sticks, we fired at them and killed and slaughtered them almost in hundreds. Four of the donkeys and one of the Aden hacks were bitten, and

died in agonies, as we were too much occupied in defending ourselves to attend to them. At length we were almost despairing, and Hardy and Hamees both cried out that they were bitten, while a black snake, with yellow markings on its head and neck, seemed to defy all my efforts to beat him down. At last I drew my revolver and fired at him, and fortunately shattered his head to pieces, and instantly the snakes that were still alive withdrew into the recess of the jungle, and I was able to attend to my companions.

Hardy, the moment he was bitten, had gashed the wound with his knife and poured nitric acid on it, and though, suffering intense agony from the effects of the acid was, I thought, safe from the poison. One of the mutes had brought him water with which he was bathing the wound, and I could for a time turn my attention to Hamees, who was lying on the ground in convulsions. With the help of Bob and the other mute I managed to pour nearly three parts of a bottle of whisky down his throat, and was delighted to see him soon become gradually quieter, and at last fall asleep. I cauterised his bite, and then, having time to resort to my numbers, I performed the necessary calculation and combination, and cured both him and Hardy.

Nimshi was dead as well as the four donkeys and the horse, and abandoning their bodies and the loads, which we could not carry, we made our way onwards, Hardy saying, as we started, "What a pity those numbers of yours cannot be worked quicker! If you could do the combination as fast as the snakes bite, it would be practically as good as being invulnerable."

"True, old man; but the thing takes time, and we must be content with what we have got."

"Yes, we may be thankful; but what a dreadful sight all those snakes were! It was enough to try the stoutest nerves. I wonder Bob did not funk."

"No, he did not a bit. He seems to have a trust in us, and that we shall pull through in the end; a simple faith, but a sufficient one."

"But when Dick was killed I should have thought that would have kept him from coming on with us."

"No, my masters," said Hamees. "Only last night Bob told me that Dick had been always pilfering from the stores, and he believes that is the reason that he was killed, and he thinks if he left you or harmed you he would die instantly."

As we went on, the forest became more free of undergrowth, and we could abandon our toilsome cutting of a path; but the ground became more and more swampy, and we had the greatest possible difficulty in getting along, and our animals constantly falling, we had to abandon more and more of their loads. Iguanas and lizards of varied shapes and hues abounded, and frogs, toads, and other reptiles seemed to gloat over our miseries and difficulties, which were not lessened by the swarms of mosquitoes and biting flies which flocked around us, and almost drove our animals and ourselves to madness by their persistent and worrying attacks; but for some time we saw no more snakes, and were hopeful that we had driven them away.

At last, however, when we were in a more than ordinarily difficult bit of bog, they came on again as before, and soon it seemed as if we could never beat them off. Animals and men were all bitten, and I can remember sinking down in the mud with my head swimming, and my left arm and leg, which had been bitten, feeling as

if they were ten times their natural size, and that my veins were filled with molten lead.

As I lay on the ground thinking my last moments had come, I rolled to and fro in agony; and to add to my annoyance, a hideous toad, on a turf of grass close by my head, seemed to croak in satisfaction at my misery and pain.

I thought that with my last strength I would smash this loathsome brute, and struck at its head with my right hand. I felt as I hit it a sort of burning sensation, and something hard, smooth, and round remained in my grasp. Looking at this, I found it to be a dull yellow stone. Was this the stone of which we had been told, which was a certain cure for the bite of a snake? I knew not, but at all events I could only try; and if it was not, and had no effect, I could only die, and thus be freed from the intolerable pain that was consuming me.

I placed the stone on my wounds, and instantly it seemed to draw the venom from them, and I was able in a few minutes to attend to Hardy and my other companions; and when they were recovered, to the animals, though with some I was too late, and in an hour we were all able to proceed on our journey without difficulty. The snakes had apparently, when they had seen us to all appearance defeated, withdrawn, and only occasionally some venomous viper darted at us, or one most horrid brute ejected its saliva, which burnt as it fell like vitriol; but the stone always, on application to the injured part, removed the venom.

Before we started I had the curiosity to look for the toad from which I had grasped this precious talisman, and found it dying, but from the cells on its back

numbers of small toads were issuing, and one of these I saw had a tiny stone similar to the one I had torn from its batrachian parent's crest. This little beast we captured and confided to the care of Bob. Hamees, who owned that when we were all prostrated by the snakes he had lost heart, now said we were certain of success, and walked on cheerfully, aiding with his hand and voice the laden animals as they struggled through the mud.

As we were trudging along and wistfully looking for some place where we might manage to halt, if not rest for the night, for the day was rapidly drawing to a close, Hamees suddenly stopped, and struck his forehead, saying: "Fool that I am to have forgotten it! The stone which has preserved us will only contain a certain quantity of venom, and should, after being used, be placed in a bath of oil, so that the poison may soak away, and then carefully dried. It has been used many times, and its virtue must be well-nigh exhausted." Fortunately we had with us some oil for cooking and lights, and a bottle was opened, and some poured into a cup, into which the stone was dropped, and which Hamees himself carried with most jealous care.

Soon after this we came to some particularly fœtid and malodorous mud, across which we made our way with difficulty, and esteemed ourselves fortunate indeed that, when our strength had almost failed us, we reached a mound of silvery sand, which rose like an island amid the horrible swamp around, and from the summit of which gushed a crystal rill of sweet water of icy coldness. Men and animals alike revelled in its refreshing stream; and stripping off our clothes we laved our wearied and fevered limbs and bodies; and it was not until the neces-

sity occurred to us of guarding against a night attack of our ophidian foes, that we could give up the pleasure afforded us by the cooling waters.

"Snakes will not cross fire or hot ashes," said Hardy. "See, round the base of the mound is a quantity of dried vegetation, which will burn well. All we have to do will be to arrange it a little, and then set it on fire, and one of us must have a light and keep a watch where the stream escapes into the swamp, for that will be the only way by which the snakes can possibly get at us."

We instantly acted on his advice, and piling the wrack together, I struck a match to set it on fire. Instantly there was a loud explosion, and we were all thrown to the ground, stunned and breathless. On regaining our senses we found that the sandy mound was now an island in a sea of fire. The marsh was a petroleum swamp, and the match had lighted the gas lying on its surface, and how when the explosion took place we escaped with our lives I know not; but, though bruised and singed, we had all escaped serious injury, and stood gazing on the marvellous spectacle around us. As far as we could see flames extended in every direction, and trees and shrubs were wrapped in fire; and every now and then some giant of the forest fell with a crash as he succumbed to the momentarily increasing conflagration.

Fortunately the mound on which we were had no petroleum in its composition, and the flames did not infringe on its limits; but we soon found that, surrounded as we were by a blazing furnace, the heat was excessive, and though we poured water over ourselves and our animals, we felt that we could not long exist in such a frightful temperature.

"What can be done?" I said. "We must perish

here unless we find some means of protecting ourselves from this heat, which is becoming greater and greater every instant."

"Look at Havana," answered Hardy; "he is lying in the water, which still keeps cool. Let us enlarge the basin from which the fountain springs, so that we can all shelter ourselves in it."

His advice was immediately acted upon, and impelled by the feverish energy of despair, we scooped away the sand, and though impeded by the animals, whom their instinct drove to the same resource, we made a space where we could all cower together, and by partially blocking up the outlet of the waters, we after a bit managed to sit somewhat comfortably up to our necks in water. Fortunately the temperature of the spring was not affected by the conflagration, although where it ran into the marsh it rose in clouds of steam and vapour.

In comparative comfort, but not knowing whether the fire might continue so long that all our provisions would be exhausted ere we could leave our mound of refuge, we passed the night, the next day, and the next night. The flames gave no sign of abating, and I was about to ask Hamees if he could summon his afrit to our assistance, when I felt Trevelyan's ring pressing on my finger, and looking at my hand saw on the palm, in crimson letters, "Have patience."

We were all nearly worn out with fatigue and want of sleep, and it seemed hard to remain quiet; but soon after this the sea of fire began to recede from the shores of our island, and after two or three hours it was so far distant that we could quit our watery lair and look about us. All of us were cramped and stiff, and our skin seemed sodden, and as if the slightest chafe or blow

would bring it off; but we were thankful to have escaped from the danger of the fire, which was now rapidly abating in all directions.

Going to the edge of what had been the marsh, we found it all baked hard, and along the edge of the mound the heat had been so great that the sand had been fused and formed into crystals of great size and beauty, while the clayey crust of the ground beyond had been baked as hard as bricks, and here and there in the fissures we saw a dark, greasy stuff, which seemed to be the refuse of the fire. When they saw this, the two mutes clapped their hands in joy, and collecting some proceeded to rub and smear themselves with it, signing to us to do the same. We followed their example, and found great benefit from it; and when we had finished anointing ourselves we turned our attention to our unfortunate animals, which stood sadly in need of our care.

When they had all been groomed and rubbed down, we were able to think of food and sleep; and, indeed, the latter was the more necessary of the two, for though we were ravenously hungry, having during our prolonged sitz-bath only been able to snatch a few mouthfuls of biscuit, we kept on falling asleep as we ate, and before our appetites were thoroughly satisfied all of us, men and beasts alike, were sound asleep.

When we awoke it was broad daylight, and only here and there on the horizon could we see signs of flames; but the soil around our refuge was still so heated that it was only by marching along the course of the stream that we were able to quit our island asylum. Though the stream twisted and turned, it led generally in the direction that we wanted to pursue, and we therefore decided upon marching along its bed; but before start-

ing we collected some of the largest and most beautiful of the crystals which had been formed by the fire. One in particular was of extraordinary beauty. It was about the size of a hen's egg, and its surface was composed of innumerable facets, which seemed to be rather the result of the lapidary's art than the handiwork of nature; and whilst it seemed colourless itself, it reflected and refracted rays of light of the most lovely prismatic hues.

It was not without feelings of thankfulness that we quitted our refuge, and pressed on our way along the stream. For five hours, as we marched, we were evidently in the limits of what had been the petroleum swamp, and every vestige of vegetable and animal matter seemed to have been consumed. At the end of this time we came to a forest, which had been reduced to ashes, and where smouldering embers still remained, and occasionally when fanned by the wind burst into tiny puffs and jets of flames. Through this we still followed the stream, and in two hours more our eyes, which had been wearied and strained, were rejoiced by the sight of green, and we heard the sound of rushing and falling water. Pressing onwards we found our rill, joined by others, had become a considerable stream, and had prevented the fire from spreading farther, and we were able to quit its bed and march along on green grass, sheltered by palms and other trees, which formed a pleasing contrast to the morasses through which we had struggled on our way to the island, and the waste of ashes we had since traversed.

Though we could hear the sound of waters increasing, we could see nothing of the fall that had caused them; and we were not sorry when the mutes made signs that we could camp where we then were in safety, and without fear of snakes.

A fire was soon lighted, and the kettle boiling for the traveller's joy, a cup of tea; and lighting our pipes, Hardy and I lay on the grass at the foot of a spreading tree, like a Persian plane, and thoroughly enjoyed a perfect rest of mind and body, after the dangers and fatigues through which we had passed. Hamees was equally lazy with ourselves, and so were the men and animals, who all lay about, enjoying their well-earned repose.

CHAPTER XVI.

A NIGHT of undisturbed rest restored all our energies, and in the morning we all overhauled our arms, and looked after our animals, which were much reduced in number. We had still the three horses, Havana, and Schelhar, but our unfortunate donkeys were now reduced to seven. We had perforce abandoned much of our baggage, and now in the respite we had we re-arranged and distributed the rest, and even Sheikh and Askar were compelled to submit to the indignity of carrying the personal kit of Hardy and myself, whilst all idea of riding was given up, and we commenced to press forward on foot.

We could still hear the sound of falling water, though we could see nothing of it; and as we went on our way, fortunately undisturbed and unmolested, it grew louder and louder, and at last, through a break in the forest, we came in sight of a precipice, which barred our way, and over which a river a hundred yards wide leaped in one body, and fell two hundred feet without a break into a large pool, from which the river issued again calmly and peacefully, and as completely blocking our route on the one hand as the precipice did on the other.

To scale the precipice was impossible, and though on the opposite side of the river we could see hills which gave promise of affording a practicable route to the plateau from which it fell, it was too wide and deep to ford, and the current was so swift, and rocks so numerous,

that to attempt to cross on rafts, even if we possessed the means of making them, would certainly result in disaster.

Apparently there were two courses open to us: one was to follow the foot of the precipice in the hopes of finding sooner or later some means of scaling it, and the other was to march down the river in the hopes of coming to some place where it was fordable, or where we might with some chance of success endeavour to ferry ourselves and our belongings across.

Hardy said to me, whilst discussing this, "It seems to me that we have got out of our road; for we have marched quite the two days which should take us through the valley of snakes, and we have never come across their king, although now we seem to have got beyond his dominions."

"Now, Hamees, can you explain this?"

"Hamees is not able to answer," he replied. "That the compass tells us our road is there, pointing to the waterfall, is true. It may be that the king of snakes lives more in that direction, pointing along the precipice, and that since leaving the mound that was our refuge in fire we have left the straight road across the valley of snakes, and are now beyond it; but see, the mutes are beckoning us to come to them."

Looking where he pointed, we saw the mutes standing close by the foot of the waterfall and signing for us to come to them. When we arrived where they were, they commenced pulling away some bushes and creepers, and soon disclosed the mouth of a cavern about eight feet in height and six in width, which, though apparently formed by nature in the first place, owed its present form and dimensions to the labour of men's hands. To this the

mutes pointed as where our road lay. Inside all seemed dark, but one of them breaking a branch off a tree which grew near, lighted it, and was instantly provided with a most brilliant torch, with which he entered the mouth of the cavern, motioning us to follow him. As we proceeded, the roof became higher, and the sides farther apart, and after about a hundred yards we found ourselves in a large and spacious chamber, in the side of which opposite to that at which we had entered was an archway, passing through which we found ourselves on a shelf of rock about six feet wide under and inside the waterfall, and this, he made us to understand, was the road we had to follow.

"A queer road," said Hardy. "It is rough and slippery from the spray of the fall, but there should be no difficulty in passing if it continues like this all the way across, if the horses and donkeys do not get scared by the water and refuse to cross. We had better see how it is farther on, for it would be awkward to get on a narrow piece where there was no room to turn round, and then to find our progress blocked. Come on, Jock."

"All right, Tom. Hamees, will you and Bob get the animals and baggage into this place, whilst we go with these dumb men and see if there really is a road here?"

Hardy led the way and I followed him, the two mutes coming close behind us, and making signs which we could not understand, but which we thought meant that we were to be cautious as to how we proceeded. The shelf of rock was only visible from the cavern for about ten yards, and then turned round the corner of the cliff over which the river fell. On arriving at this corner we found that there was a considerable indentation in the cliff, and that to our great satisfaction the shelf con-

tinued perfectly practicable for another eighty yards, when it wound round another corner and was again lost to sight.

Following the shelf close against the face of the cliff we passed by some dark and gruesome caves, at the mouth of which were a quantity of bones, among which, mingled with those of wild beasts, we could distinguish portions of human skeletons. As we passed them we could see the mutes showed signs of fear and apprehension, and signed to us to step lightly and maintain perfect silence; and then turning the other corner we found that the shelf led us into another cavern on the other side of the river, and from this cavern we emerged into a grassy valley surrounded by wooded hills on two sides, and on the other two by the cliff and the river.

"That's a good enough road," I said. "We will hurry back and get the animals across. I expect we shall have to blindfold them to do it."

"We can certainly manage the two horses," said Hardy, "for they know us so thoroughly; whilst the donkeys, if the worst comes to the worst, the six of us can lug across by main force; but it is no use loitering here, let's be moving back." And he started, and I followed him, but lingering behind to look at some marks on the walls of the cavern which attracted my attention, and which seemed to be masonic symbols, he came abreast of the dark caves just as I, followed by the mutes, came in sight of them.

I was horrified and distressed to see from one of them a huge python issue forth, and seizing upon Hardy envelop him in its folds, notwithstanding his manly and courageous struggles. I instantly rushed to his assistance, but before I could reach him I found my farther progress

barred by a huge species of lizard of a most hideous shape, which menaced me with claws and teeth, and a single blow of whose powerful tail would have swept me from the rocky shelf into the basin beneath into which the river plunged.

Drawing my revolver I emptied barrel after barrel into the head of my horrid foe, but apparently without any effect. I could, though pretty well occupied with my own affairs, see how it fared with Hardy, who, standing with his legs apart and putting forth his utmost strength, had gripped the python by the throat, and with both hands was holding its head away from him, though his arms and body were confined in its coils. I tried to pass between my own foe and the cliff, in the hope that I might get to my friend's assistance, whose powers I could see were sorely taxed; but the brute that was opposed to me was too wary and active for me to succeed, and I was being driven backwards and nearer to the edge of the shelf, when one of the mutes, whom I had falsely accused of deserting me, as they had turned back on seeing my opponent come out of the cave, ran up by me with a long and flexible wand, which he deftly introduced into one of the nostrils of the monster lizard, and running it right up into its brain the creature fell dead, a stream of black blood coming from the nostril into which the wand had been inserted.

Springing over the lizard's body I drew my hunting knife, and telling Hardy to be of good heart, I commenced to sever the snake into two just below his hands. As I was doing this, Hardy, whose forces were failing, slipped, and he and the snake together rolled towards the edge of the shelf, and it was only by seizing the snake and holding on with all my force that I prevented the cata-

strophe; but as it was we were in an awkward position, for the whole weight of Hardy and the snake was hanging from my arms, and whilst I could feel that the folds of the snake were gradually releasing, at the same time I was sensible that my own hold on the rock was by no means secure, and that I was surely and slowly being dragged closer and closer to the edge, and felt that at any moment the combined weights of Hardy and the snake might overbalance me. The mutes were near, but why they did not assist me I could not understand, and all I could do was to exert every muscle in my body to resist the fatal drag. I would if I had dared have tried to change my grip from the snake's body to Hardy's clothes, but it was impossible. I could only hold on and pray that the Power which had shielded us hitherto would not desert us now.

The moments seemed to lengthen into hours, ay, years and centuries, when suddenly I felt a lightening of the weight I was sustaining, and was relieved by hearing Hardy say: "All right; Jock, hold on a moment more. I've my arms free, and have got my fingers into a crevice, which I can drag myself up by."

As he spoke I heard some stunning reports, and then felt myself seized by my belt and dragged back into a place of safety, still holding on to the snake.

It appeared that when I sprang to Hardy's assistance another lizard, larger and more hideous than the one which had attacked me, had opposed the mute who had killed my antagonist, and with a blow of his claw had laid him on the ground with a frightfully lacerated chest. His companion attacked the monster, which stood over the prostrate body, with a hatchet that he carried; but the scales which shielded the brute's head

were impenetrable, and he too falling, it seemed as if all was finished; but fortunately he was able to draw a knife from his wounded comrade's belt, and to plunge it two or three times into the lizard behind the shoulder, where there was a small patch of soft skin undefended by scales.

Notwithstanding this the circumstances had not improved, for a third lizard was coming to the assistance of the one engaged with the mutes, when Hamees and Bob, who were becoming anxious at our long absence, came round the corner armed with our heavy rifles, and with a few well-directed shots had killed both these monstrous reptiles, and seeing how I and Hardy were situated had dragged us from our perilous position, and then cut the snake to pieces. The reports of the rifles confined by the wall of falling water had sounded like thunder. We had not much time for congratulation, for the condition of the wounded mute was so serious as to demand our instant attention. His fellow in misfortune seemed heart-broken at the prospect of the death of his companion. So telling Hamees and Hardy to do everything in their power to alleviate his sufferings and to prolong his life if possible, while I made the cabalistic combination of numbers which would restore him to health and strength, I set about doing it at once. In this no hurry was possible, for a single misplaced figure or wrong deduction would render the whole charm of none effect; and before I had finished I could hear Hardy saying two or three times, "You must be quick, or it will be too late." And when at last I completed the last stroke and the man was restored, another moment would have finished his life.

He was not only restored to health and strength, but his

speech was restored also; and though we could understand nothing of what he said, we were thankful that he was freed from the frightful misfortune of dumbness; and wondering much that we had not before thought of the power we had of healing them, I went through the combinations afresh, and had the unspeakable pleasure of seeing his companion also freed from the curse of dumbness. No more snakes or monstrous lizards (those we killed might well be the prototypes of the legendary dragon of St. George) appeared, and bringing torches we explored the holes from which they had issued, and found nothing in them save bones and filth. So now knowing that we were safe from attack, we got the baggage and animals across. The two dogs came by cowering and dejected, and when they saw the dead lizards they evinced the liveliest terror. The two horses Hardy and I led across, but as we had expected, the donkeys were only dragged along by actual *force majeure.*

In the cavern on the side of the river on which we now were it will be remembered that I had seen some masonic emblems, and to these Hardy, Hamees, and myself, all old and experienced members of the craft, now devoted our attention; and after much thought as to what they meant, we determined on clearing away the surface of the ground beneath a certain sign, and soon came to a large stone in the centre of which there was an iron ring.

"Something wonderful here, Hardy," I said, as we all three got hold of it and tried to lift together. For some time it resisted our efforts, and we could not ask for the assistance of the whilom mutes, whose names, so far as we could understand them, were Josa and Benoma, and Bob; for we all three thought we were on the eve of some

wonderful masonic discovery which it was not fitting should be made known to any save those initiated into the mysteries of the craft.

At last it gave signs of yielding, and with a united effort of all our forces we dragged the stone out of its seat.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN the stone was moved it proved to be the keystone of a circular-domed chamber, about ten feet high and twelve in diameter, in which a lamp was burning, and into which Hardy and I dropped, while Hamees remained above ready to give us any assistance that we might require.

The lamp, which was shielded by a crystal globe and stood on a small pedestal on the north of the chamber, was similar in appearance to an electric glow-lamp, and had been maintained alight for all the centuries which it must have been there by some mysterious means, for this chamber was nothing more or less than the tomb of a pupil of Hiram the architect, who, as we found, had been sent by Solomon to the queen of Sheba.

Of what we found there it is not lawful to write nor to speak to the uninitiated in detail, but the body of Joash, as the envoy was called, was embalmed and deposited in a niche on the south side of the chamber, and on its breast was a gold plate inscribed with the cabalistic numbers and the masonic emblems. On the eastern side was a chest full of documents, and the plans and drawings of a most beautiful building; and on the south side was an olive-wood table, inlaid with mother of pearl, on which were a complete set of masonic implements in gold and ivory; whilst in the centre was an iron pillar exactly similar in appearance to that which we had seen at Doeru, and which opened in a similar manner. Inside

the pillar we found a document written by Joash, stating that he, finding death approaching, had caused this vault to be constructed both to act as his tomb and as a receptacle for the pillar, documents, implements, etc., until they should be discovered by brethren of the masonic body, and that when that occurred they were to take everything with them save the lamp and his body, and proceed with them to the court of the queen of Sheba.

Hardy and I looked at each other in astonishment, and I said, "What a red-letter day for masonry! The sneers of the uninitiated will be stopped now."

"Truly," he replied; "but first we must fulfil the injunctions of the dead man there, and I suppose that it will be as well for us to sacrifice our tent to sew up the case, table, and other things, so as not to expose them to the gaze of Bob, Josa, and Benoma."

"Certainly. But this pillar is a heavy thing to carry; how are we to manage?"

"Why, we must take it with us whatever betides; and now we are near our journey's end, and if, as is most probable, the traditions of the queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon are kept up, we have with us what will insure us a good reception. I wish we knew accurately how we had to march; we must be close to Saba now, and, as a sailor would say, 'should steer small.'"

I was looking at the papyri and parchments which were in the case when Hardy spoke, and said, "I should fancy that Joash must have had something to guide him on his journey; I wonder if there is any kind of map here?" and looked carefully through them, and at last my search was rewarded with the discovery of a plan which showed Joash's journey from Jerusalem to Damas-

cus and Arvad by land, and then by sea to Tyre and Egypt, and down the Red Sea to Aden, Socotra, and Marka; and also his route by land from the African coast to this place where he died, and a note where Doeru was situated to say that, owing to illness among his followers, he had left one of the pillars which were entrusted to his care there; and then the swamp and valley of snakes were clearly marked, and this river and fall, but in front were only marked, "Here we should meet the officers of the queen," which, as far we could judge, would be three days' march in a W.N.W. direction from where we then were.

Hamees remarked, "We have passed by the tree where the king of the snakes dwells, and have not seen it; it must have been reduced to ashes in the fire."

"What will the snakes do without a king?" asked Hardy.

"O master, do not scoff at these things. The snake, called the king, is inhabited by a spirit which cannot die, and this spirit takes up its abode always in a snow-white-snake; and when one snake that is white as down dies, the spirit quits that body and goes about the face of the earth seeking for another snake in which it may dwell."

"I do not scoff or laugh," said Hardy; "we have seen too much not to believe; but I asked for the sake of knowledge. Now let us pack up these things, and then to-morrow morning we shall be able to start."

"Certainly," I said. "Hamees, will you get the tent opened in the cavern, and we will see if we can't manage to cover these things with the inner fly, and keep the outside for shelter against rain."

Hamees got up by the hole through which we had

descended with the assistance of Hardy and myself, and soon returned with the inner part of our tent and some needles and thread, and we managed to cover up the things we had found and haul them up into the cavern; after which we replaced the stone, and covered it up carefully with sand and gravel, so that there should be no trace of our having disturbed it.

We found, on going out of the cavern, that Bob had taken the horses and donkeys to graze, and had not returned; so, as it was getting on towards sunset, we took our guns and went to look for him, and also see if we might not shoot something for our supper.

We followed the marks of the horses and donkeys for some distance, and were afraid that Bob might have got into some difficulty, when we heard him calling to us, and going to where he was, found that he was all safe, but that our animals had been joined by seven other donkeys, all milk-white, and marked on the shoulders with a triangle inscribed in a circle, and having halters and packsaddles on them.

"Why, Bob, where did these donkeys come from?" I said.

"Me no know, master. One time horse feed, and donkey run on, and me run too; then horse he follow, and then donkey cry, and me hear other donkey cry too, and then our donkey run, and soon me see new donkey come and make friend."

"There you are, Hardy," I said; "the transport for the things from the tent is provided for. To-morrow morning we may get on our way without abandoning anything more."

"Certainly. I never thought when I spoke to you at Aden that we should have such strange adventures as we

have gone through already; but there, adventures are to the adventurous. Now, Bob, drive all the animals back to the cave, and tell Hamees that we will all, men and animals, sleep there to-night."

"True, sahib; me go quick; but what time me see master fight snake, me tink both master dead one time."

"Now, Jock," said Hardy, as Bob drove the animals off, "we must get something for supper. I wonder if Hugh can be alive in this country we are going to; there must be some other road than that by which we have come, where the only difficulties are those that can be overcome by ordinary means, for no people would have run the risks we have been through for trade."

"I suppose there must; indeed, the Gallas said there was. But it is no use bothering about that; this is the road we have come, and now we are so far on our way it is no use our going back to look for another."

"All right, come on. There! I think I see some guinea-fowl in that big tree yonder; we are shooting for the pot, so we will just sneak up and shoot them sitting."

We stole towards the tree which he pointed out, and which stood alone in the middle of an open grassy space, and got close to it without disturbing the birds, and I raised my gun and was about to fire when Hardy prevented me, and, making signs for me to be silent, pointed towards the roots of the tree.

Looking in the direction in which he pointed, I saw, lying at the base of the tree, a milk-white snake on a scarlet cushion, and round the neck of the snake was a circlet of gold and precious stones.

I whispered, "That must be the king of the snakes."

"Hush!" said Hardy; "let us go back and get the cage, and see if we can trap him."

We hurried back as fast as we could, and told Hamees what we had seen; and he said: "I do not understand this; we must have passed the valley of the snakes. Perhaps in the fire the tree under which the king of the snakes has his dwelling was destroyed, and he, escaping from the flames, has made his way hither. The cage I have, but for the milk there is neither cow nor goat. Whence will my masters procure it?"

"Hamees, Hamees! have you not seen the milk we carry with us in our tins? There is the fire burning, and the water is already bubbling; we will make milk for the king of the snakes, and in it we will put medicine, that he may sleep and not escape us."

We were not long in preparing our trap, and baiting it with a gourd full of milk, in which we put eighty drops of laudanum. Josa and Benoma followed our actions with intense attention, and when following us they came near the tree under which the white snake was lying, they seemed much excited; and Josa, taking the cage from Bob, who was carrying it, stole carefully and silently close to the cushion, and put it on the ground by it, and then came back to where we were standing, bringing the string by which we could close the door with him. Whilst he was doing this, his companion Benoma had cut some reeds which grew close by on the banks of a little rill, and deftly fashioned them into pan-pipes, upon which he now played a sad and plaintive melody.

After a few bars the snake began to move, and, uncoiling himself, reared his head high up, and looked round. We, being hidden by some bushes, could watch every motion, as he after a time left the cushion and began to move round and round the cage. Two or three times he seemed inclined to enter, but withdrew,

although evidently the smell of the milk exercised a powerful fascination over him; at last Josa whispered something to Benoma, who all this time was playing on the pipes, and he changed his tune to a more lively one, which seemed to excite the snake, for his motions, which had hitherto been very slow, became quicker, and suddenly darting into the cage he commenced drinking the milk, but leaving more than half of his body outside, so that it was impossible for us to close the door.

"I am afraid the trap will fail after all," I said, as the snake seemed to be drinking all the milk, and not to get inside the cage altogether.

"Wait," said Hardy; "the laudanum must take effect soon." And sure enough, after about ten minutes, the snake drew itself right into the cage, and, coiling round the gourd, went to sleep.

We instantly closed the door, and, running up, made ourselves masters of our prize, and bore the cage and the cushion, which was of silk, embroidered with pearls, in triumph to the cave; and now, having no fear of disturbing our captive, we fired at the guinea-fowl which were roosting in the tree, and were successful in bagging four, which were soon roasting before our fire.

After our supper, Hamees said to us, before we turned in, "My masters, it is fitting that we should render thanks to the All-wise, the Architect of the universe, for the protection He has afforded us, and the wonders He has permitted us to see."

"Certainly, Hamees," said Hardy and I in a breath. And all kneeling down, Hamees, in a few well-chosen words, offered up thanks for our deliverance from many and great dangers, and prayed that the care and mercy

which had hitherto shielded us might be extended to us in our further wanderings.

After this act of devotion we lay down, with hopeful hearts, to seek the much-needed rest which was to fit us for the toils of the morrow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In the middle of the night I either awoke or had a most vivid dream. I thought I was in the cavern, with my companions and the animals slumbering peacefully around, and all the packages strewed about, with the cage containing the white snake by my side, and a faint light from the fire by which we had cooked our suppers dimly illuminating the objects near me, and all apparently in the same condition as I went to sleep; but I felt as if there was some peculiar influence upon me, and, springing to my feet, I gazed round to see if any man or animal had made its way into the cave.

As I looked all seemed to fade away, and the cave was illuminated by a soft and silvery light, and in the middle I saw a table surrounded by seats, one of which was occupied by Trevelyan, dressed in the same manner as I had seen him in my dreams, and in front of him was a large book, which he was attentively studying. Over the seat opposite him was a crown and a shield, on which was emblazoned a dragon, and over the others were other shields, with various crests and mottoes on them; but above two, which were on Trevelyan's either hand, the shields were blank.

As I was looking in wonder, Trevelyan raised his head, and, motioning to me to approach, said: "Friend, this is the table of the chivalry of Camelot, and opposite is the chair of the blameless king; the others are those of his knights, of Lancelot, Galahad, Gawaine, and the

others; and these two here, on either hand, are destined for you and your companion, if you fail not in the task that you have undertaken. Hitherto you have encountered many dangers, and your toilsome journey is nearly done, but there are still obstacles to be overcome, and risks to be faced. Be brave and faithful, and you will succeed. On the eve of the accomplishment of the last of your dangers I will be with you; be wary in your dealings with those you meet, and part not with the golden key. The men who were mutes, Josa and Benoma, are subjects of the queen, but they know not the mysteries of her kingdom; if you speak to them in Hebrew, they may answer such things as they know, but their knowledge of the language is limited. The snake must be guarded with watchful care, and all serpents will obey you; but if he escape before your journey is ended, danger and tribulation await you. Farewell."

As he finished speaking the light faded away, and soon, by the flames of the fire, which I replenished with fuel, I could see the cavern in the same condition as when first I awoke, and no traces of Trevelyan, the table, or seats, but my companions still slumbering peacefully and quietly. I at first thought of waking Hardy, but remembering what he had gone through the day before, I refrained, and, after looking round to see all safe, I laid down and soon was asleep again.

When I again awoke Hamees had livened up the fire and was making coffee, Bob, Josa, and Benoma were saddling the horses and donkeys, and Hardy was looking over our arms.

"Why," I said, "are you all about?"

"Yes," answered Hardy; "I did not wake you, you looked so happy asleep. But now we ought to be able to

make a good march to-day, and those two fellows, Josa and Benoma, seem in such spirits, that I believe we must be coming near to their friends."

"I think so, too," I answered; "but we shall soon know, for I saw Trevelyan in the night, and he told me they understood Hebrew, but only a little." And then I described to him what I had seen during the night. He was inclined to believe it a vision; but as Trevelyan, when he had appeared before in my dreams, had given us good advice, he said no doubt, whether he was actually present, or I had only dreamed that I had seen him, I should believe what had been told me.

Hamees, overhearing our conversation, said that when, on awaking, he had gone to the fire, he had found that it had been made up during the night, and that he had not been up during the night, nor, as far as he could make out, had Bob or the two others.

"Now Hardy," I said, "it must be either you or I."

"I didn't do it," said Hardy; "so I suppose Trevelyan was here after all. Now let's have our *chota hazree* and get away."

"All right; but I will call to Josa and Benoma, and see if they can answer me in Hebrew."

I at once called, "Josa, Benoma, come here," in Hebrew.

They answered my call with evident astonishment, and answered: "Your slaves obey. The master speaks in the words of the priests and elders; our knowledge is but scanty."

I with some trouble made out from them that in their religion Hebrew was used, but that few of the people understood it, but that as they had been for some time in the service of a priest, they had learned a little. And now, having established means of communication, I found

that they had been made prisoners by a rival of their master, and, their tongues having been cut out, they were set adrift in the Galla country, and that being made prisoners and taken to Doeru, the lubas had decided that they would serve as sacrifices to Waka and Oglie, from which fate our intervention had rescued them; that the route they had followed in leaving their country—which they called Saba—had been a very long one, and as for much of it they had been blindfolded they could give no description of it; but that the valley of snakes and the country of the dwarfs, upon which we should enter in the course of the day, lay near the portion of Saba of which they were natives.

They also said that many times men had been sent to capture the king of the snakes, but none had succeeded; and that the tree under which he ordinarily dwelt must have, as we supposed, been destroyed in the fire, for they had themselves been attendants of men sent to capture him, and had passed by this road under the fall, but never before had they been assailed as we had on the previous day, as the precaution had been taken of sending animals on in front to glut the reptiles. They had been left behind before reaching the place where the king of the snakes was supposed to dwell, as only men specially initiated were considered to have any chance of success; but in the two instances in which they had been in the party, those who went to attempt the actual capture had never returned, though they had waited for them many moons.

We were soon on the road, Josa and Benoma taking charge of the new donkeys, which they said were similar to those ridden in Saba by the judges and priests, and which no ordinary person was permitted to mount.

After three hours' march we saw the hills and trees coming to an end, a vast and tangled cane-brake stretching before us, and here Josa told me the dwarfs lived, and attacked all who attempted to pass. The hide-screens which we had prepared, and which we had, in prospect of the attack of the dwarfs, guarded more jealously than any of our possessions, were now unrolled, but we found that they would be sadly small for all our party.

We could leave nothing behind without great inconvenience, and certainly not the pillar and other things we had found in the tomb of Joash, the pupil of Hiram.

Josa and Benoma, who saw and aided in our preparations, now made me understand that they could weave thick mats of grass, which could be hung to bamboos, of which, fortunately, there were many in the place where we had halted, and soon we were all at work twisting grass into ropes and weaving it into mats; and Josa and Benoma proved to be so expert, that in four hours we had completed enough mats, with the addition of the hide-screens we had brought from the Galla country, to entirely protect the whole line of men and animals.

When we had fitted all these it was too late for us to hope to get through the cane-brake in which the dwarfs lived that night, and therefore we decided on camping where we were; and in order to avoid any surprise from our pygmy foes, who sometimes, under the cover of darkness, ventured into the open, we cut quantities of thorns and strewed them all over the ground round our resting-place, Josa telling me that the dwarfs, who wore no clothing of any kind, would not in the night attempt to cross them.

Nevertheless, we decided that it would be wise for us

to keep watch; and we arranged that Hamees and Bob should be on guard for the first portion of the night, and that I and Josa should relieve them, and keep the middle watch, and Hardy and Benoma the morning.

As soon as our camp was made and fires lighted, Josa and Benoma set to work weaving a species of helmet for us which would protect our heads and shoulders if we looked above the screens and tried to fire at the dwarfs, while Hamees and Bob attended to the animals, and Hardy cooked our supper, and I fed the king of the snakes with some milk which I poured into the gourd in his cage. As he was drinking it I was able to look at the collar which was round his neck, and which was a plain band of gold set with diamonds, emeralds, and pearls, disposed so as to form the numbers given to me by the Rabbi at Aden, but which, on referring to the notes I had made, were in a combination of which I had no explanation.

After our supper Hamees and Bob took the watch, and the rest of us slept quietly till I was called. Hamees, on my relieving him, said he thought once or twice he had heard the sound of voices as if children were crying to each other, but after listening carefully he could distinguish nothing.

For some time my watch passed quietly and uneventfully, and I attempted to find out from Josa something about the kingdom of Saba; but in addition to his imperfect knowledge of Hebrew, he seemed strangely reluctant to give me information, averring that I must know about the country or why had I travelled all the way to visit it; and that I knew the language and learning of its wise men, who would tell me all when I met them.

Suddenly he put his hand on my arm, and signing to me to be silent, pointed in the direction of the cane-brake, and listening intently I heard the sound of voices, and quietly awoke all our companions. We got our screens and put them up on that side, and could, by peering into the darkness, dimly distinguish some small figures moving about beyond the thorns we had scattered on the ground around our camp.

Suddenly Havana, who was very restless, gave a tremendous howl, and looking to see what was wrong with him, I picked up two tiny arrows, about eighteen inches long, which had stuck in the ground close by him.

"Now," said Hardy, "they have commenced, I think we may fire at them without any bloodguiltiness." And, loading our guns with buckshot cartridges we fired at the figures we saw, and instantly heard some dismal screams and yells, and then heard a pat, pat, pat against our screens, as the arrows of the pygmies struck them, and a few whistled close past our ears, but fortunately without striking any of us.

We reloaded, and poured two or three more volleys into our foes, who now retreated, and we were left in peace until daylight, when seeing no one moving we left our camp and went to where we had seen the people who had shot at us, and here we found the bodies of three men who had been killed, not one of whom could have been more than four feet in height; and several marks of blood, and bows about three feet long strung with strips of cane, and quivers made of basket-work, plastered with a substance like bitumen, each of which contained about a hundred arrows, all similar to those which had been shot at us during the night, and having neither feather nor notch, but with the points nicked in two or

three places, and covered with some dark substance, which both Josa and Benoma asserted was a deadly and rapid poison, death resulting almost immediately from the slightest scratch.

Havana, who had followed us out of the camp, commenced sniffing at the blood and soon started off on a trail, and in five minutes commenced barking at something in a small bush, and soon a small man crawled out on his hands and knees, his legs being too badly wounded for him to walk, and apparently appealing to us to save him from the jaws of Havana. I ordered Havana to lie down, and Josa and Benoma, picking up the dwarf, who seemed to expect that he would be immediately killed, carried him into camp. Havana now began to follow another track, but as it led him close to the edges of the cane-brake, and some of the dwarfs who were hidden there commenced shooting their tiny darts at him, though fortunately without effect, I called him off, and all of us returning to camp, we commenced loading our animals and arranging our shields and screens. Whilst Hardy and Hamees superintended this, I attended to our captive; and though at first I found some difficulty in working the combination for his cure owing to my ignorance of his name, I was at last successful.

As soon as he felt that he was healed he sprang upon his feet and attempted to bolt, but Havana was after him in an instant, and before he had run twenty yards knocked him down and lay on him. I called to Josa, and with his assistance we bound the manikin hand and foot. I now told Josa to try to explain to him that we had no wish to harm him, but only desired to pass through the cane-brake, which was the harbour of his fellow tribesmen, without molestation.

This Josa assayed to do, but after some time had to confess that he was unsuccessful; so now, the preparations for marching being completed, we put the dwarf on top of one of the loads, and I gave the order to move on. Before going into the canes we made a short circle round to see that our arrangements were successful, and finding everything all right, we put on our grass helmets, and getting inside the screens, we directed our path towards an opening in the tangled mass of canes.

As we drew near the dwarfs shot their arrows at us, but thanks to our screens they did us no harm; and though we could hear them screaming and shouting to one another, they never came so close that we could get a clear view of them or fire at them.

The path under foot was bad enough, muddy and full of roots and holes, indeed, it was nothing but the track of the wild beasts which shared the canes as a refuge with the dwarfs.

Suddenly, when according to Josa we were about half-way through, we felt our progress arrested, and looking over our screen we found that the canes had been twisted and knotted together in front of us so as to completely bar our road.

To cut these away was impossible without quitting the shelter of our screens, and to retrace our steps was equally impossible, as the path was so narrow that we could not manage to turn our movable fortress round.

"What can we do?" I said to Hardy; "we are fairly jammed here."

"Not a bit of it," he answered. "Tie a rope round that little imp that we have as a prisoner, and giving

him an axe, make him cut the canes away. He knows the effect of fire-arms, and if properly threatened will do as we bid him."

"All right, we will have a try."

Josa, who had taken charge of our captive, now secured a long line round his neck, and untying his hands and feet, we put an axe in his hand, and firing off a revolver, we explained by signs what we wished him to do. He, as far as we could make out, agreed, and we hoisted him over the front of the screens, and under the threat of the revolver he cut away manfully. Hardy and I took it in turns to watch him, and we had got ahead about six or seven feet, and could see that the barrier was nearly removed, when, taking our eyes off our captive prisoner for an instant, he managed to cut the rope that secured him, and disappeared into the brake before we could get a shot at him.

The arrows of our tiny and invisible adversaries were now showered upon us more thickly than ever, and we fully realized that it would be certain death to quit the protection of the screens even for an instant. How we were to get on seemed to be beyond our comprehension, when I noticed the horses trembling and shuddering, and that both the dogs showed evident signs of uneasiness. We had not long to wait to find out what frightened them, for a huge rhinoceros came ploughing through the canes direct upon us, and it seemed as if he would have charged full upon the flank of our party; but either the appearance of our screens frightened, or for some other reason acted on him, for when within about six feet of our movable fortification he stopped dead short, and after regarding us for some moments, turned to his left, and passed close ahead of us, clearing away the

tangle of canes and creepers in an instant, and opening our road for us.

We were too thankful for his timely appearance to dream of firing a shot at him, and pushed on along the path, which now grew somewhat wider and better. The dwarfs would not relinquish their annoyance of us, and the appearance of any one of our heads above our screens was the signal for a volley of arrows; but though our helmets were often hit, fortunately not one of the poisoned darts penetrated them.

In another hour we found, however, that the arrows began to grow fewer and fewer, and presently ceased altogether; and on looking over the screens to see if we could find out the reason, we saw that we were accompanied on either side by a whole army of snakes.

I would have fired on them, as I considered that they were as dangerous foes as the pygmies; but recollecting that we had been told that if we could secure the king of the snakes all others would be obedient to us, I refrained, and thus escorted by our novel allies we traversed the rest of the canes without any more difficulty than that consequent upon the badness of the path.

When once we had got out of the cane-brake we found ourselves in a lovely country, where grassy plains were studded with groups and clumps of trees, and where numberless herds of antelopes were grazing on the banks of clear running streams.

Our camp was soon formed under an enormous fig-tree, and the snakes, which we thought had left us when we quitted the brake, came towards us, driving before them three of the dwarfs, among whom was our late captive, and who, to escape from death from the serpents, rushed into our camp for refuge.

The snakes all stopped some thirty yards short of the tree under which we were resting, and when we had secured the dwarfs they had driven to us, Josa told me that I should show the king of the snakes to his assembled subjects, and prove to them that he was alive and well, when they would return to their own place.

I accordingly took the cage, into which, while his majesty had been sleeping off the effects of the laudanum, we had put the cushion on which he had been lying when we first saw him, and placed it on a small mound; and we had the pleasure of seeing all the snakes pass by in their companies, cobras, pythons, vipers, cerastes, and many of whose names and species we were ignorant, each division evidently under the command of officers, of whom one came up from each company and circled round the cage where their monarch was confined, and being assured of his well-being, returned to his comrades.

CHAPTER XIX.

As soon as the snakes had disappeared, we brought their king back into camp, and turned our attention to our new captives. One, who was not more than three feet in height, was of most appalling hideousness, and his ears were so large that they concealed the sides of his head and flapped down on his shoulders; while, notwithstanding his diminutive height, his feet were fully fifteen inches long, and wide in proportion; and one could easily, while looking at him, understand how the fables arose about races of men whose ears were so large that one served them for a mat to lie on, while the other afforded them covering while they slept; and of others whose feet were so big that at midday, when the sun was hot, they lay on their backs, and holding up one foot, were sheltered by it from the burning rays.

His face, too, was particularly hideous, and of an exaggerated negro type; indeed so hideous was he that his two companions, though no beauties, looked handsome in comparison. The one who had been our prisoner was evidently in a most deadly fright; but it was to a large-eared, big-footed one that we turned most of our attention; for Benoma, after looking at him attentively, said he believed he was the chief of the pygmies, and that through him some means might be taken to prevent his people from attacking all passers by.

Hamees, on hearing this, said we might now be sure of a good reception in the land of Saba, as we had two

royal captives, and also brought with us the presents which had been entrusted by Solomon to the dead Joash, to take to the queen.

All our great difficulties we considered were now over, for both Josa and Benoma told us that on the following day we should reach one of the frontier posts of Saba; and though they said we would find that all strangers were looked upon with great jealousy, and were often killed, and in other cases made slaves of, still we, considering what we brought with us, would be well treated.

"Never mind, Jock," said Hardy to me; "they won't kill us or make slaves of us when they see what we have; and do you know I feel sure that in a few days I shall meet my brother?"

"I hope you may," I answered. "I have no fear for what is going to happen, and cannot help believing that we shall soon find an explanation of many of the things which have been puzzling us since we have been in Africa. Now, Hamees, do you feel fear of the people of Saba?"

"My masters, fear does not live where hope is present; my desire and my longing have been to reach the country of Saba, and now they approach their fruition I have no fear; difficulties and dangers may arise, but the word has been written which says that all of us shall hereafter look upon this journey with joy."

All of us were cheerful and happy as we sat round our camp fire smoking our pipes, and tried to make out from Josa and Benoma what their country and its inhabitants were like; but they showed great reluctance about imparting information, and constantly said they could not understand my questions. The gist of all they said was that they were only poor men and slaves; and that it was not becoming for them to speak of their betters, but

that we would find that their lives were devoted to us. We had saved them from death at Doeru, and restored their speech, and nothing that they could do could repay the benefits they had received at our hands.

Our saddles and bridles, bits, stirrups, and spurs, all underwent a special cleaning, and we looked out our most respectable clothes, so as to make as decent an appearance as possible when we encountered the frontier guards of Saba on the morrow.

None of us overslept ourselves in the morning; and carefully packing our goods on the donkeys, Hardy and I mounted Askar and Sheikh, and rode on in front to keep a look out for the people we expected to see. As we rode along we started numbers of antelopes and hares, and saw two or three herds of camelopards, but for the day forbore from the chase. Soon we came in view of a low range of wooded hills, on the summits of which we could see a number of small towers, about a mile from each other, and straight in front of us, distant perhaps seven miles, was a large castellated building.

We felt now that we must be getting close indeed to the frontiers, supposing that, as they afterwards proved to be, these towers and the castle were the stations of the guards. As we rode on, the woods showed signs of the constant presence of wood-cutters, and their huts and those of herdsmen were scattered about in considerable numbers; and at last we came upon a flock of sheep attended by two men and a boy, and, mustering up my best Hebrew, I saluted them, and asked them the way to the nearest city.

They seemed as astonished as if we had dropped from the skies, and one of the men set off running as hard as he could in the direction of the castle. The other said

something to the boy, who drove the sheep away, and then, standing right in front of us, made signs that we should proceed no farther. Our followers coming up soon afterwards, Josa and Benoma spoke to these men, and said that they were shepherds who had charge of a portion of the flocks of the governor of the castle we saw before us, and that the man who had left had gone to tell a post of guards, who were stationed a short distance away, of our approach, and that the shepherds begged us to go no farther until an officer came, for besides looking after their flocks they were also supposed to give notice of all strangers approaching.

Josa and Benoma evidently had much to say to their countrymen, who regarded us with looks of wonder and astonishment; but when on our noticing that our guns were being spoken about, we offered to show the effects of a shot from them, they said that though the shepherds would be glad to see it, still they were afraid of what might be done to them if it were found out that they had been seeing new things before the arrival of their superiors.

Hardy and I dismounted, to await the return of the messenger who had been sent to give notice of our approach, and looked over all our belongings, and consulted with Hamees what we should say when we were asked the reason of our visiting Saba. We concluded to tell a simple story, viz. that Hardy had come in search of his brother, and that I, having heard of the greatness of the queen, had come to see with my own eyes if all that was said was true, was the best.

We had scarcely agreed upon what we should say when we heard the sounds of a horn, and twenty horsemen, under the orders of a man of about four and twenty,

all clad in coats of mail and wearing bright steel helmets, surmounted by plumes of crimson feathers, and armed with lances and long, straight swords, rode up, and were followed at a short distance by an equal number of heavy-armed footmen, also clothed in mail, and carrying heavy spears, and short, two-edged swords.

The leader, on arriving at thirty paces from where we were standing, gave the order to halt, and reining up his horse dismounted and gave him to the shepherd boy to hold. As he came towards us we went to meet him, and told Josa and Benoma to tell him who we were and why we had come to his country.

He said that he was not in a position to judge of the truth of our story, that it might be true or it might be false, but either way it made no difference to him, as he had plain orders, and must obey them, and that was to keep all strangers at his post until he had communicated with his chief, who commanded the castle we saw before us, and that all our baggage must be given up until a decision was made as to what was to be done to both us and it.

I tried to see if he would understand Hebrew; but he said he was a warrior, and though he could manage a horse and wield a sword, his tongue could not use the speech of priests and wise men, and that we at once must follow him to his post; and then noticing the white asses and the marks on them, said that we must be robbers, and bold ones to come thus with animals which had been stolen from great men of his nation.

Our story about finding them in the neighbourhood of the cave, he said he could not possibly believe; and ordering his men to divide themselves and march on either flank of our party, I and Hardy being about to

remount to accompany the officer, he said that we could not be permitted to ride in Saba until orders were received about us; but though firm and decided in his orders, he was perfectly courteous, and I believe out of politeness came with us on foot. After walking for half an hour we came to a clear space, in which were pitched tents, ranged in order, and in front of one, occupying the centre, floated a flag, which we afterwards learned was the standard of Saba, having emblazoned on it in gold and colours on a white ground a triangle inscribed in a circle. In the midst of the triangle, in Hebrew characters, was written, "Glory to," and in the three spaces between the sides of the triangle and the circumference of the circle, "the All-wise, All-powerful, All-good."

This tent was the quarters of the officer in command, and on either side were others: one occupied by subordinate officers, and the other by scribes. We were halted in the centre of the camp, and our beasts unloaded, and led off to be picketed with those of the cavalry of our escort, who occupied the right wing of the lines; but neither Sheikh nor Askar, nor yet Havana and Schelhar, would go with the men who approached to take them away, and I had, through Josa, to ask that I and Hardy might ourselves attend to our horses and dogs.

After much discussion this was granted; and then one of the tents being cleared of its inmates we were conducted into it, and told that if we quitted it without permission we should be cut down by the guards that surrounded us. All our arms and belongings were taken from us, and I thought myself indeed fortunate that the men who were commissioned to perform this duty did not seem to know anything of pockets, and missed my pocket-book with its valuable contents, the mystery of

the cabalistic numbers, the golden key and parchment out of the pillar of Doeru, and also the writing from the pillar in the tomb of Joash; neither did they discover my case given me by the Rabbi, nor yet the stone from the head of the toad, which Hamees had concealed in a fold of his turban; but the small toad which Bob had kept through everything they took from him, and would have destroyed it if Benoma had not prayed them to keep it alive, it being most precious.

All our baggage was piled in the front of the tent where we were confined, and as the tent was open on that side, we could see all that was done to our belongings. At first the officer seemed inclined to overhaul everything; but a loaded rifle going off in his hands as he was examining it, gave him a start, and he gave orders that nothing was to be touched until he received instructions as to what was to be done with us, and what we had brought with us.

The three dwarfs were fettered with chains at the foot of a tree, and their having fallen into the hands of the men of Saba seemed to be a great source of joy to the guard; but what was thought of them and of the king of the snakes we were unable to learn, for Josa and Benoma, through whom alone we could hope to find out what was said, were separated from us.

Though confined to the tent and jealously guarded, we were not otherwise badly treated, for we were provided with felt rugs and cushions to lie on; and on making signs that we were hungry and thirsty, two black slaves brought water in a brazen ewer, which they poured into a basin of the same metal for us to wash our hands and faces, and gave us linen towels to dry them on; and then brought in a large stool or low table, on which was

placed a dish full of boiled mutton and rice, and cakes of unleavened bread, together with flagons full of wine, which was not unlike a mixture of claret and port; and when we had finished eating, and the remains had been cleared away, and our hands again washed, they gave us small earthenware bowls of a hot liquid, somewhat resembling tea, with great lumps of curded milk floating in it.

"Certainly," said Hardy, "they do not mean to starve us." And bringing out his pipe and tobacco pouch, he commenced to smoke, and I was not long in following his example. The sight of our inhaling the smoke seemed to cause intense astonishment to the soldiers, for soon all who were not on duty were congregated together to gaze upon the strange sight.

Whilst we were smoking and wondering what was next going to happen to us, we heard the sound of a horse galloping, and a mounted messenger dashed into the camp, and dismounting went to the tent of the officer. Evidently he had brought some orders about us, for our guards were told to bring us out of our tent, and men were employed in erecting a large awning, and spreading rugs and mats under it, under which, when it was completed, we were made to stand fronting a pile of cushions; and the toad taken from Bob, and the cage containing the king of the snakes, were put on the ground before us; whilst on one side Benoma and Josa were brought, and we saw that they as well as ourselves were considered prisoners; and on the other, the three dwarfs were placed, chained together and jealously guarded.

All this being arranged, a horn was sounded, and all the men in the camp were drawn up in a double line; and we saw that, besides the cavalry and heavy infantry,

there were a number of light armed men, whose equipment consisted of helmets and shields, half of them carrying long bows and quivers full of arrows, and the others slings and wallets, filled with pebbles.

As soon as all were in their positions, the officers standing in front of their men, and the young man who had come out to meet us standing alone at the entrance, a horn was again sounded, which was answered by another at some little distance, and immediately afterwards a chariot, drawn by three horses abreast, and followed by ten horsemen, drove up at a gallop, and halting just outside the camp, there descended from it a man of about forty, and two attendants, who carried rolls of parchment.

The new arrival was received with great respect by the commander of the camp, and conducted to the pile of cushions in front of us, on which he seated himself. The two men who were with him knelt on the ground in front of him; and then the commander of the camp gave a narrative of what had occurred, which was taken down by the two kneeling men.

As soon as this was concluded, Josa and Benoma were brought up and examined, and notes were taken of all they said; and when their examination was concluded, one of the scribes, in Hebrew, ordered me to approach.

I came forward with Hardy and Hamees; and the new officer informed me that he had been told by Josa that I could speak Hebrew, and ordered me to give to him, as governor of the frontier, our reasons for coming to the country of Saba.

I told him that we were subjects of a mighty queen who ruled over a quarter of the people of the world, and that I had come into Africa with the desire of learning

about the country of Saba, of which I had heard from an old man of the tribe of Judah, in one of the ports of our queen; and Hardy had accompanied me in the hopes of finding his brother, who had been wrecked many years before, and who we believed was now a prisoner in Saba. I had also to tell him of all our adventures on the journey; but when I came to that portion of my story relating to the finding of the tomb of Joash, I said that I could not explain anything to a man who was unacquainted with the secrets of masonry, as handed down from the times of Solomon the son of David by the pupils of Hiram the architect.

At this he seemed much astonished, and commanded that I alone should come with him into the tent of the commander of the camp, and that it should be closed so that no one should see what took place. As soon as we were alone he gave me the sign, the grip, and the pass of an entered apprentice, to which I responded, and told him that I had proceeded much further in masonry than that degree; and that although I could tell him something, it was not fitting that all should be told to one who was only initiated into the first degree.

"How is this?" he said. "You will find how, for hundreds of years, this secret has been handed down to us, and no one is put in a position of trust in this kingdom who has not been initiated. But now I will befriend you if you will tell me more."

"Knowest thou not that nothing in the craft may be told for hope or thought of reward? And thou, an officer and a ruler in Saba, triest to obtain knowledge by promises of protection!"

"Nay; but I wish that thou shouldst say unto me all that thou hast seen on this journey."

"As far as it is lawful I will, but there are portions of which I must not say anything, except to those who have attained the third degree." And then I told him of all our journey, of the pillar at Doeru—but of the key and the parchment I said nothing,—of our danger from the snakes, and our being surrounded by fire on the sandy mount, of the path beneath the fall, and the struggle with the snake and the monstrous lizards, of the discovery of the tomb of Joash, and as far as was lawful of the contents thereof, and how it was that I was destined to bring to whoever was the successor of the queen who had visited Solomon the things with which Joash was charged, of our capture of the king of the snakes and our conflicts with the dwarfs, and how the dwarfs, whom we had brought captive with us, had been driven towards us by the snakes, and how afterwards the snakes had paid homage to their captive monarch.

"Thy words," he said, "awake in me many memories; but I cannot say aught, by the oath of my office. As governor of the Gate of the Rising Sun, I may permit no stranger to enter into the kingdom of Saba save as a prisoner and captive, and that thou and thy companions should be treated as captives by me, who am thy inferior in knowledge and power, is not fitting, neither is it right that those who appeal by the memory of Hiram the architect should be evil intreated. Nay, it is proper that ye should be received as honoured guests; but I dare not permit you to pass the castle of the gate save bound and fettered. I will send to the wise men who sit at the gate of the house of the queen, whose face no man has seen, for directions as to what I must do. Until that time, if thou and thy companions will promise to remain in the castle, and to work no spells nor charms

to harm the country of which I am a guardian, ye shall be treated as honoured guests."

"O guardian of the Gate of the Rising Sun, we are not come to do evil but good, and the promise is given before it is demanded."

By this time we could hear murmurs outside; and the governor, who told me his name was Eloaz, said: "It is well; but hark! the guards are impatient, and they are saying that thou hast cast a spell over me. I must go forth into the open, lest peradventure they fall upon thee and thy companions, and slay both thee and them."

So saying, Eloaz opened the hangings of the tent and went out, followed by me.

CHAPTER XX.

As Eloaz came forth there was a great hush and silence in the camp, and all listened most attentively as he spoke in a loud voice, and, as I learnt afterwards, said that though the laws of the kingdom were that no strangers should be permitted to pass its frontiers save as prisoners and in chains, that those laws could not be intended to apply to us, but that he would not allow us to go beyond the Castle of the Rising Sun until he had received instructions respecting us from the wise men who sat at the gate of the queen's house, and in the meantime we were to be treated with respect and consideration, and any man who worked evil against us would be punished.

Orders were at once given for our animals to be loaded; and Eloaz, apologising for his chariot not being large enough to contain Hardy and myself, besides his attendants, gave permission for us to mount our horses and ride by his side, and ordered Havana and Schelhar to be released, who at once came bounding towards us, and showed by their actions how delighted they were to be again free.

All our baggage was packed on the animals. Bob, being assisted by several of the soldiers, as well as by Benoma and Josa, soon had the loads arranged, and leaving Hamees to bring the baggage along, we galloped off with Eloaz, whose driver urged the steeds of his chariot to their highest speed; and the ground being

rough we could see that the occupants of the chariot were jolted about most unmercifully, and both Hardy and I congratulated ourselves that there had been no room for us in the springless vehicle; and as we galloped along by its side I told him what had passed between Eloaz and me in the tent.

"Did you ask about my brother?"

"I told Eloaz that you were in search of your brother; but though he seemed to pay special attention to that part of my narrative, he said nothing about him, and he left the tent so suddenly that I had no time to put any special questions to him."

"Hugh must be among these people I am certain," answered Hardy; "but you see he must have been taken across the frontier in chains, and for aught we know might be in chains still. Remember how those poor fellows in Abyssinia suffered, and judging by the way they chained those wretched dwarfs, the way people are chained in Saba is not the most comfortable possible. Poor Hugh, so many years a slave and prisoner, and now perhaps confined in chains!"

"I should not think he would be in chains. Remember, it is true that he was taken into Saba as a slave, and whoever became his owner would not be able to get much work out of him if he were fettered. But what is this? We are getting near the castle."

We now halted before a small building, which protected a drawbridge over a deep dry moat or ditch, and one of Eloaz's escort sounding a horn, the men in charge of the bridge lowered it down so that we could cross over; and as we were on it, I could see that the moat extended as far as one could see, both to the right and left, and that it was twenty feet deep by forty wide at the top; and

Eloaz, seeing that I was looking at it, called out to me that this ditch formed the outer defence of Saba, and was carried right round the kingdom.

Inside the ditch the country was cleared of trees and laid out in corn and other fields, whilst a road fifty feet wide, paved with large square stones, led right up to the castle gates. Up this road Eloaz led the way; and as soon as he was seen coming, a man who was stationed on the summit of a tower over the gate struck a sort of huge brazen gong, and as the sound was heard, a bridge over a moat round the castle was lowered, and the gates, which were composed of two huge slabs of sculptured stone, slowly opened, and a party of heavy infantry marched out and drew up to salute Eloaz as he drove up and across the bridge into the courtyard of the castle, where, getting out of his chariot, he told us to dismount, and calling to some men who were standing near ordered them to take our horses from us.

Hardy said, "I won't go away with the governor until I see where Sheikh and Askar are quartered, and that they are comfortable." So I said to Eloaz that before he took us to where we were to lodge, we wished to see the place where our horses were to be stabled; and he said that a good man always cared for his animals, and that he thought it was quite right that we should. And then, after speaking a few words to the driver of his chariot, he led the way to a sort of inclined pathway leading down to a large chamber, in the walls of which were many bronze rings over stone mangers, and through a corner of which ran a stream of pure water.

The men who had taken Askar and Sheikh from us led them down here, and we tied them up opposite mangers full of grain, and took off their saddles and

bridles, which were hung up by Eloaz' grooms, who, producing a curious kind of curry-comb, dressed the horses, and then bringing felt rugs out of a chest standing in the chamber put them over them, and girthed them on.

"Seems to me," said Hardy, "these fellows know something of horses, and how to take care of them. Why, now"—as the men brought large armfuls of straw—"they are littering them down properly."

Eloaz, as the grooms finished their work, said, "Stranger, is it well? Now, stranger, on this hand thou wilt find a chamber where thy goods may be bestowed, and here there is space for all thy animals. Thy black servant can remain here with them, and, behold, the keys and the fastening I give into thy hands."

As he said, the opening out of the stable was a large room, lighted like it from above by large apertures guarded with massive bars, and to it and the stable were iron studded doors with massive locks and bolts; and the keys of these two doors, each over a foot in length, Eloaz took from a hook and placed in my hands.

"Follow me now, thou and thy friend," said Eloaz. And returning into the courtyard he led the way to a small staircase made in the thickness of the outer wall, and ascending this we followed him along the wall, which must have been twelve feet thick, and was built of blocks of stone of enormous size, some being at least fifty feet long; and their breadth being the thickness of the whole wall, and passed on to an open terrace on which opened a number of rooms.

"Here, O stranger," said Eloaz, "will be lodging for thee and thy friends." And opening the door of one he showed us a room furnished with rugs and cushions, and

whose rough stone walls were covered with hangings of needlework. This and three other similar rooms were given to us, and then Eloaz, whom all the sentries, of whom there were many, and other people whom we passed, seemed to regard with astonishment for his behaviour to strangers, taking us farther along said: "Here are the bath-rooms, and ye must desire to remove the stains of travel; the attendants know their duty. Thy dogs, which are beautiful, may remain outside while you enjoy the bath."

I said, "O lord of the castle, the lodgings are good, and a bath is pleasant; but the heart of my friend yearns for tidings of his brother, of whom I spake to thee in the camp."

"Truly if the man whom I believe to be his brother, and who was brought hither, it is now a period of four years, it is well with him."

"How? where is he? and what is he doing?"

"When he was brought here by the people who received him at the hands of the Gallas, he was, according to the laws of Saba, sent to the city of the queen as a prisoner; but he had found favour in the sight of all men, and his chains were the lightest that we have. When he arrived at the city of the queen he was given to the guardian of the lions to assist him in his labours. One day a lion escaped and killed two women, and the guardian of the lions was frightened, and fled, and cast away his spear, lest it should hinder him in fleeing. The brother of thy companion, if it be his brother, seized upon the spear and alone faced the lion and smote him and slew him, and now he is guardian of the lions of the queen, and he who was his master and keeper of lions is now his slave, and has to do his bidding."

When I translated this to Hardy, he was overjoyed to hear of his brother being alive and well, but said that a keeper of lions did not seem to be a very happy lot.

As Eloaz asked me what he said, I told him, and he replied: "The post of guardian of the queen's lions is one of honour and dignity, and to his brother will be shown welcome and grace. Now, my guests, I must quit you, for I must send a writing to the city of the queen to inform the wise men who sit in her gate of what has occurred."

"Ask him, Jock," said Hardy, "if I can by the same messenger send a note to my brother."

Eloaz answered when I had translated: "He may write; but the writing must be placed in the hands of the wise men, and they will decide if the keeper of the lions may receive it."

Hardy at once wrote a short letter to his brother, and showing it to me said, "I had better tell Eloaz what was in it." Eloaz, on seeing that it was not written in Hebrew characters, said, "That is not writing that he has traced there; and what is this stuff on which he has put these marks?"

I then remembered that Eloaz and his scribes when I had seen them write had with great pains, with clumsy pens, inscribed their reports on prepared skins; and that if, as seemed probable, the civilization of Saba had stopped short at the time of Solomon, that Eloaz and his countrymen had never seen or heard of paper: so I explained to him as well as I could how paper was more easily made than parchment, and that there were many alphabets in existence besides the Hebrew.

"Truly thou hast told me many wonders; but the wise men who sit in the gate, they know nothing of all these

things, and they will say that sorcery is intended; and therefore I pray thee write the words of thy friend on this skin in the manner in which it is customary for our scribes to write."

I wrote with difficulty, owing to the parchment being very imperfectly prepared, and the reed they gave me to write with being a very clumsy implement for that purpose, though elaborately ornamented with metal work, while the ink was a kind of thick, greasy paste, which I afterwards found was made out of the ashes of a certain kind of nut, mixed with oil. However, after a bit I managed to make some kind of a fist of it But now another difficulty arose; the alphabet used in Saba in writing Hebrew was an archaic one, and though I could manage to decipher it, I could not write it, and my Hebrew translation of Hardy's letter was as incomprehensible to Eloaz as the English original had been; and we had at last to employ the services of one of the scribes of Eloaz, whom we gratified for his work with a piece of red silk, part of the scanty remnant of our trading stores.

The messenger, Eloaz told us, would be despatched in the morning. "And now," he said, "there is food prepared, and I beg that thou and thy friends will join with me when they have refreshed themselves in the bath. A messenger will attend here to conduct them to the hall for feeding. And now I will leave thee for the bath."

As Eloaz left the doors of the place which he had pointed at, the baths were opened, and black slaves, dressed in white, conducted us into a chamber floored with polished wood and surrounded by divans, where they assisted us to remove our clothing, and much wished that I should take off the case given me at Aden, but I was determined never to let it quit me; and then, covering ourselves with

clothes which they gave us, we went into another room where the temperature was raised by flues to a great height, and where we were taken charge of by other slaves, who rubbed and shampooed us and washed us from head to foot with hot water and a species of soap, and afterwards sluiced us over with cold water. All the fittings of this chamber were of polished stone, and it was lighted with lamps in niches in the wall, guarded by slabs of talc, or some similar substance.

On returning into the outer room, the slaves who had first met us brought dresses for us, similar to the Arab dress of the present day, and signed to us that we were to dress in them. After some discussion between Hardy and myself as to whether it would not be better to retain our European clothes, but considering how scanty our kit was, and how it had suffered in our journey, we concluded that it would be advisable for us to put on the clothes provided for us.

On leaving the bath we found that it was dark, and that two men with torches were waiting to conduct us to the room where we were to sup. They led us down the staircase by which we had come up, and across the courtyard to a large doorway, on passing which we found ourselves in a chamber brilliantly lighted by lamps dangling from the roof, and on either side of which were ranged six gigantic negroes dressed in crimson, and armed with huge burnished spears. In this chamber, which opened into the room where we were to sup, we met Eloaz and the officers of the garrison; and a flourish of horns being given, the curtains which shrouded a door opposite to that by which we had entered were drawn on one side, and we were ushered into a large octagonal room, where were arranged a number of low tables with carpets and

cushions around them. At one of these Eloaz sat by himself; whilst Hardy, Hamees, and myself were conducted to one on his right, and the others were occupied by officers and scribes, three or four sitting (or squatting) at each. As soon as we were all seated, women slaves brought ewers of scented water and poured it over our hands, while others held basins to catch it, and others again dried our hands on soft towels or napkins. Both ewers and basins were of brass, curiously moulded and chased, and the towels were white and embroidered with coloured threads.

The women, who were all young and handsome, now withdrew, and men entered, bearing dishes, which they placed on the various tables; and at a signal from Eloaz all fell to, the only things provided to assist our fingers in conveying the food to our mouths being large horn spoons.

Before me and my companions was set a lamb roasted whole, stuffed with some kind of fruit, and surrounded by roasted birds of different kinds; whilst in other dishes were mounds of boiled rice and Indian corn, and piles of plantains; and on the cloth that covered the table were two or three different kinds of bread. We were hungry, and did ample justice to the good fare set before us, and for a time we and all the others in the room seemed to be fully employed in satisfying our appetites; but after a time conversation began, and Eloaz, noticing that we were apparently flagging in our consumption of the viands set before us, sent us choice bits from his own table.

At last no man seemed inclined to eat more, and the women slaves again appeared with their ewers, basins, and towels, and all washed their hands and lips. The

tables were now removed by the slaves and replaced by others, on which were piled various fruits, both fresh and dry; and Eloaz clapping his hands, a troop of boys entered bearing goblets, which they distributed to all, and then brought in earthen vessels, which they took to Eloaz, who, after examining the marks on them, ordered them to be opened, and the contents to be poured into the goblets.

We watched to see what was to be done, when Eloaz, rising to his feet, raised his goblet and took a long draught first, saying, "Thanks to the All-bounteous!" And seeing all the others follow his example we did the same, and found that our goblets, which each might hold about a couple of bottles, were full of a strong, sweet wine.

We drank some, but soon we found that drinking was a serious business; for first Eloaz pledged us, and afterwards various other members of the company, and soon it became evident to us that to hold our own after dinner in Saba required stronger heads than any of us possessed.

Fortunately, Hardy and I soon noticed the exceeding strength of the wine, and only sipped when we returned the pledges of our hosts; but Hamees, who knew little about wine, was not so cautious, and we had to exercise all our tact and ingenuity to prevent him becoming noisy; but as for Eloaz and the others, the strong drink seemed to have little effect on them.

After a time the female slaves entered, bearing wreaths of flowers, which they placed on the heads and hung on the arms and shoulders of all present; and then one side of the room having the large doors which composed it turned back, we saw a choir of boys and girls together,

with a number of people with harps, horns, and pipes, and an instrumental and vocal concert was given; and when this was finished, Eloaz rose from his seat and bade all good-night.

We were conducted to the rooms which had been prepared for us, which we found lighted by lamps similar to those in the hall, and which we had the curiosity to examine, and found were fed with petroleum. Hamees was soon asleep, and Hardy and I, after a pipe and talk over the events of the day, were not long in following his example.

CHAPTER XXI.

Next morning we were astonished on waking to find most excellent coffee provided for us, and I found that one of the attendants could understand a little Hebrew, and from him I learned that coffee grew in the country, and that the supper or late dinner of the previous night took place every day, but that it was the only public meal. We soon dressed and went down into the courtyard, where we found Eloaz busy in giving orders to his subordinates, and arranging for the sending of despatches to the capital. As soon as he saw us he came and spoke to us, and said he had determined on sending the dwarfs at the same time, and showed us a curious sort of box or cage in which they were confined, with their chains still on them, and which he said would be put on a cart drawn by oxen.

We pleaded for the poor pygmies to be made more comfortable, for they had not even straw to lie on, and the chains seemed to cause them grievous inconvenience; and though Eloaz seemed to think our interference was uncalled for, as he said they were worse than the beasts of the forest, we had the satisfaction of seeing their fetters re-arranged and straw given them.

An escort of ten cavalry, and a similar number of heavy infantry, accompanied them, and these were accompanied by a number of slingers and bowmen, who besides acting as light troops, performed the duties of servants to the heavy troops. All was so well arranged,

and discipline was so good, that little time was lost in sending off this party; and when they had departed, Eloaz proposed that we should go over the castle, and from the summit of the keep have a view of the country which we were soon to enter.

To describe the whole of the castle would require more space than I can give to it, but it was a very large and astonishing structure; and though there were many divisions, lofty towers, and large terraces, we were astonished to find that there was not a single arch in any part of it. Some of the rooms were supported by rows of columns, but most were too small to require this; but the way in which the ceilings and roofs were supported and doorways made was most ingenious. What astonished me most was the number of doors made of solid stone, carved in many instances with most elaborate designs.

We saw the quarters of the garrison, stables, granaries, and armouries, and were quite surprised to see how everything was kept in order, and how well it was all arranged. From the summit of the keep we could see a line of wall running in either direction, and behind it a wide and well kept paved road; and at every hour's journey, Eloaz told us, there was a tower garrisoned by fifty men, and that two days' journey apart were other castles like that of the Rising Sun, where were the only gates in the wall, which with the ditch we had seen the day before surrounded the whole kingdom of Saba, and protected it from the incursions of the savage tribes by which it was surrounded.

Outside the wall and ditch we could see the smoke arising from different military camps, where men were stationed to protect the shepherds and their herds and

flocks, and also to watch for the approach of strangers; but there were no towns or villages to be seen. Inside, on the contrary, we could see regular roads, bordered by trees, leading to villages and towns, and on every hill we could see a grove of trees, in the midst of which there rose a building, and which Elōaz told me were all places of worship. Fields carefully cultivated and farms abounded, and the whole view on that side gave evidence of a populous and prosperous country, whose inhabitants were far advanced on the path of civilization.

Eloaz also showed us with much pride his horses, dogs, and hawks, and proposed that, whilst we were waiting for an answer to his letters, we should amuse ourselves with hunting, as the country outside the ditch abounded in game of all sorts, and to this we gladly agreed.

Eloaz went out to hunt in great style, being accompanied by his falconers and huntsmen, who led dogs coupled in leashes: some being powerful hounds with good noses for tracking wounded game; and others a kind of greyhound, which hunted by sight like ours, though when we tested them we found that their speed did not at all equal that of Schelhar. He was very expert also in the use of the spear and bow, and many times we saw him hit a bird on the wing with an arrow; but what astonished us the most was the extraordinary force and accuracy with which some of the men armed with slings delivered their missiles from them, which we found were accurately shaped oval pieces of copper, weighing seven ounces, and with which we repeatedly saw gazelles knocked over at a distance of fifty yards. We had several very good opportunities also of showing the power and accuracy of our guns and rifles, as game of all kinds abounded, and we shot leopards, giraffes,

buffaloes, and rhinoceroses. One day with one of the last we had a very exciting piece of sport. Eloaz had ordered some men to beat through a piece of tangled bush, in which he said some francolin were sure to be, at which he intended flying his hawks.

He was waiting outside on his horse with his favourite hawk on his hand, and was just in the act of throwing it off when a large white rhinoceros charged out of the bush close by him, causing his horse to start and plunge and nearly unseat him, and then to bolt. The rhinoceros, regardless of the slingers and archers, who showered their missiles on him, went after Eloaz, and the ground being heavy began to gain on him. Hardy and I were at some little distance, as we had been told not to come too near, for fear of making the francolin fly back over the bush instead of passing over open country, where we might have a chance of seeing the hawk swoop after them.

Seeing Eloaz in danger, we unslung our rifles and rode after the rhinoceros, but could not get an opportunity for a shot until the beast had overtaken him, and thrusting his horse under the belly had capsized it and ripped it open. Eloaz fortunately fell clear, but the rhinoceros seemed maddened by the smell of blood and continued thrusting at the unfortunate horse with his horn. I sprang off my horse, and the rhinoceros exposing his flank I planted a bullet in him close behind his shoulder. He instantly turned from the corpse of the horse, which was already dead, and charged at me. I tried to mount, but somehow my stirrup came away from the saddle, and I had to run to avoid the charge. Fortunately I had about fifty yards' start, and made for a tree whose branches, hanging low down, gave me some hopes of being able to

gain a position of safety before the beast came up to me. I know I ran as I had never run before; but in boots and breeches I was not well equipped for a foot race, and I could hear the brute snorting and snuffing close behind me when I was still thirty yards from the tree. I was expecting every second to feel the horn of the animal running into me, and was thinking that my pocket-book and the numbers were in the castle, and that probably I should be dead before I could possibly make use of it, when I heard the report of a rifle, and then Hardy's voice saying, "Now's your chance, old man; the brute's turned."

I by this time had reached the tree, and grasping the branches swung myself up into them, and from a place of safety could see what was going on. Hardy had galloped after the rhinoceros when he saw it pursuing me, and had from his horse's back been successful in wounding it again, and I could see that blood was pouring both from the wound inflicted by him and also from the hole made by my bullet, and that the brute was making after Hardy, but was going very slowly. Hardy had no difficulty in keeping out of its way, and Askar, whom I had been riding, cantering up under my perch, I dropped into the saddle, and getting hold of my rifle, which I had slung on the saddle before attempting to mount, I reloaded, and riding after the rhinoceros got another bullet in, and had the satisfaction of seeing him immediately after roll over dead.

Eloaz we found was unhurt, though much grieved by the loss of his horse, and anxious about his hawk, which he had cast off as he fell, and which had flown away unnoticed during the time our attention had been occupied with the rhinoceros.

Hamees, who was with us, when he saw the rhinoceros dead, jumped off his horse to cut off the brute's horn, and would not permit any of Eloaz's men to touch it, or assist him; and when I asked him why he seemed so anxious about it, said he would tell me when we returned to the castle.

As I was speaking to him we heard a man shouting out something, and looking up saw that the hawk had taken advantage of its liberty to go after a gazelle, on the head of which it had pounced. The gazelle, in its frantic endeavours to free itself from its assailant, was beating its head on the ground, and striking at the bird with its feet. I called to Bob, who was leading Schelhar, to loose her, and pointing out the hawk and gazelle to Eloaz, who had mounted another horse, galloped off to try and save the bird from injury from horn or hoof. Fortunately we got up in time, and I do not know whether Eloaz was more pleased at the safety of his hawk than he was grieved at the loss of his horse; but I know that he said that we had had enough sport for the day, and that we would return at once to the castle.

When we got back, we as usual went to our allotted quarters, and after a bath we were astonished to find that provision had been made for us to sup in our own rooms instead of as usual with Eloaz and the officers of the garrison; and one of the attendants gave me a waxen tablet, on which were written a few words, to say that Eloaz had been shaken by his fall, and that he hoped we would remain in our rooms until the morning, when he hoped to be able to come and see us.

Hamees, when I read this, said: "There is some danger here. I think not that the wali (governor) was too much hurt to eat, for he rode without assistance; and if my eyes

did not deceive me, there were new faces among the men in the courtyard when we arrived. The answer about us has come from the palace of the queen, and its contents are unfavourable."

"Nonsense," said Hardy. "The man may well be stiff and sore after such a fall; and I'm sure I much prefer to have our food up here instead of in that public room, where many of the fellows do not regard us with kindness, and nearly all are jealous of our being favoured by Eloaz."

"I don't much care one way or another. If a message has come about us it will decide once for all if we are to enter into the country of Saba as friends or to be treated as prisoners: in the former case well, in the latter we must trust to the same Power that has befriended us hitherto."

"Certainly," answered Hardy. "I do not feel any fear, but I own I feel anxious about Bob being by himself with the horses and baggage. I should like him to be with us."

"All right. Hamees, here are the keys; will you go and see all right below, and tell Bob to come up for the night?"

"My masters, I am busy," answered Hamees, who was cutting away at the horn of the rhinoceros with a knife; "will not one of the masters go?" And then to me, "I think what I have seen and said is true. You, my master, secure the book with the writing of the numbers and such things as you can conceal in your clothing, and let the other sahib go to bring Bob here."

Hardy said, "I'll go like a shot; but what is it you are doing there, Hamees?"

"When the master returns I will tell him."

Hardy at once took the keys, and leaving our rooms went to the stairs leading to the courtyard, but on reaching the bottom he was astonished to find that a number of men had followed behind him so as to prevent his returning, whilst in front a strong party, under the orders of one of the officers, barred the way, and made signs that he was to give the keys up. On his refusing, half a dozen men set on him, and not without damage to themselves succeeded in wrenching the keys from him, and then, bringing Bob from the vaults where were our animals and baggage, they brought them both back to our rooms.

Soon after Hardy left I heard a sound on the terrace outside our quarters, and drawing back the curtain that closed our doorway I saw that a strong body of men were posted there.

I asked the person, who by dress and bearing I considered was in command of them, what was the reason of his being there. His only answer was that he had to obey, and his orders were that none of us were to leave our rooms that night.

I went back and told this to Hamees, who simply said: "My words are true; danger surrounds us. See! I have completed one cup; if I have time I will make others," holding up a little goblet he had cut out of the rhinoceros horn.

"Why, man, what can you be thinking of—making toys when we have to exercise all our wits to keep clear of danger?"

"No toy, my master. Know you not that it is believed that a cup made out of the horn of the rhinoceros will show whenever poisoned drink is poured into it?"

"No; certainly I did not."

"Know then that such is the belief; but it is not true

of all the horns of rhinoceroses, but only of such as have certain marks on them; and I saw that the one that was slain to-day had those marks, and I believe that some of the soldiers of Eloaz saw them likewise, and would fain have made themselves masters of the horn."

Just as he had finished speaking, Hardy and Bob were brought back to our room, and the officer in charge of the men on the terrace again said that we must not come out of our rooms without permission.

"Certainly Hamees must be right," I said. "Let us see what we have here which is necessary for us. I have the book in which I wrote the numbers told me by the Rabbi, and the case he gave me is still round my neck. I have also the key and the writing out of the pillar we saw at Doeru, the stone out of the head of the toad, and parchment which was in the pillar in the tomb of Joash, and the golden plate which was on his breast. I will sew all these inside my shirt, and as these people do not understand our clothing, I dare say they will not be able to find them; but now let us have supper. The king of the snakes we can't hide, and they know we have him."

"Yes," said Hardy; "I am hungry, and a good meal is always a good preparation for trouble."

"Hold, my master," said Hamees. "This is the first time that our food has been sent to us in this fashion. I will test it with the cup of the horn."

He carefully put portions of all our meat into the cup, or on a slice of horn, which he cut so as to serve as trenchers, but nothing happened.

"'Tis well," he said, "we may eat without fear; but the drink is more dangerous." And opening three earthen vessels filled with wine he poured a portion of the contents of each into the cup. The two first he pronounced

innocuous; but when he poured the third out a slight effervescence took place, and as soon as this subsided, on pouring the liquor carefully out of the cup, we found a thick slimy deposit at the bottom.

"See, my masters; the dangers I spoke of have commenced. Eat and drink and be thankful; as for the wine in this vessel, it is poisoned, we will pour it away, and in the morning they will come to see if we are dead, and will be astonished to find us living."

"Come, this seems serious. We will, however, have our supper and then sleep; the dogs will guard us against any men coming in while we sleep," said Hardy.

"All right," I said. "All four had better sleep in this inner room; there is only one entrance into it, and the dogs must lie there."

We soon made our sleeping arrangements, and notwithstanding the dangers by which we believed we were surrounded, were soon asleep.

In the middle of the night we were disturbed by hearing Havana growling fearfully, and striking a light we found that he had seized a naked man, who was oiled all over, and had every vestige of hair shaved off his head and body, and whose intentions were evident, for from his hand had dropped a short, two-edged dagger as sharp as a razor. Havana had hold of him by his right arm, and we could hear the bone cracking in the grip of the dog's powerful jaws.

"What shall we do with him?" I said.

"Stab him with his own dagger, and fling him out on the terrace," advised Hamees.

"No, that is too much like murder," said Hardy.

"He intended to murder us," I answered. "But I cannot understand, if they want to kill us, why they

should try to poison us or murder us in our sleep. I should have thought that if orders have been sent to make away with us, it might be done openly."

"Never mind reasons and thoughts, we must deal with facts," said Hardy. "Here we have a murderer, and what must we do with him?"

"Me know," said Bob. "Suppose sahib make one sack, and sew him up in that, then put sack in one corner, and we all lie all same dead, and then men come see what ting happen, we make know who want kill us."

"Not a bad idea," chorussed all of us, and we soon had the intruder trussed hand and foot, and sewn up in the covering of one of our beds, and placed him in a dark corner where he might pass for a cushion or bundle.

Havana, when he saw our prisoner secure, returned to his post at the door, while we lay down, though not to sleep, to wait for the morning.

CHAPTER XXII.

At daylight one of the scribes whom we had seen in attendance on Eloaz, but had always disliked and mistrusted, came to our chamber, and though he concealed his feelings well, could not avoid giving a start of surprise when he saw us all alive and well.

He said that an envoy had been despatched from the wise men who administered the affairs of Saba for the queen, and that he would arrive in the course of the day, when we would have to appear before him; and in the meantime he had sent orders that we were, in accordance with the rule of the Castle of the Rising Sun, to be kept as prisoners, and that men were waiting outside to put chains on us.

Hardy whispered to me: "Shall we resist? I could brain this fellow with my fist, and I'd sooner die fighting than be murdered or tortured to death without a chance of resistance."

"No, no, man; that would be only to seal our fate; we should be killed at once; and however we may be chained or fettered I shall be able to work the numbers for our relief, or perchance the case may be opened, and then we shall get assistance; let me speak the man fair.

"How is this? We have done no harm. Where is Eloaz, the governor of the Castle of the Rising Sun? Why does he not come to see these orders carried out? Is it that he is ashamed to treat men in this manner who

have been his friends, and came to do good to the kingdom of Saba?"

"Eloaz!" laughed the scribe; "there is no governor of that name. He who yester eve was chief over the Castle of the Rising Sun is now a miserable slave. He has disobeyed the orders of the wise men, and ere the sun sets this evening will have paid the penalty of his disobedience with his life. Till the envoy arrives 'tis Anahac the scribe who rules in the Castle of the Rising Sun."

Anahac, for it was he, now clapped his hands, and instantly there entered men carrying chains and iron bands, accompanied by a smith and his assistants with a portable forge.

Iron rings were rivetted round our necks, ankles, and wrists, and we were all chained together by a long chain fastened round our waists, while shorter chains connected the iron rings to it. Not one of us could move without disturbing the others, and the movements of our feet and arms were so much restricted that we could scarcely walk or raise our hands to drive away a fly from our faces, whilst the chains from the rings round our necks were so short that we were obliged to maintain a stooping position.

Fortunately they did not search our clothing, and none of the things I had secreted about my person were taken from us, and Hamees was able to save his rhinoceros horn cup; but all our other belongings were seized upon, and instead of the rugs and cushions which had furnished our rooms we were now accommodated with a few armfuls of vet and sodden grass, cast down in the corner of a miserable cell, to which we were driven.

In searching our rooms they came upon the midnight assassin; and Anahac, whom I heard mutter, "Fool not to succeed!" said aloud, "Murder, even of our enemies, is

not permitted; cast the wretch from the ramparts." And bound and confined as he was, this wretched instrument of our enemies was thrown from the castle walls. The king of the snakes was taken charge of by two men, acting under Anahac's orders, and our two faithful dogs were cast into the dungeon with us, much to our joy, though Anahac had no doubt ordered them to be put with us to increase our discomfort; for the cell was wretchedly small, and when the door was closed, there being no other opening, the air was soon oppressively foul, and caused us to suffer from vertigo and headache. We should, I think, have soon died of suffocation, if from time to time the guards, who were stationed outside, had not opened the door to gloat over our misery and jeer at our sufferings.

The hours dragged on but slowly, and we thought it must already be nearly night, when we were hauled out of our den and pushed and shoved down the stairs and across the courtyard into the room where we had been in the habit of supping with Eloaz and the officers.

Here we found seated the envoy from the wise men, surrounded by scribes and officers, and on one side stood Eloaz, a prisoner under the keeping of some of those who but the day before had obeyed his slightest beck and nod.

When we appeared before the envoy, who was a middle-aged man, of a most forbidding aspect, he said: "It has been told to me that one of you strangers has a knowledge of the sacred tongue; the charges that are laid against you will therefore be read to you by Anahac the scribe, who, faithful to his trust, has informed the council of wise men of your crimes."

Anahac, standing up in the middle of the room, unrolled

a scroll, on which was written a series of charges against us, accusing us of witchcraft and sorcery, and having by their means made our way to the frontiers of the kingdom of Saba; also of having falsely represented ourselves to be the guardians of articles of great value, which had been sent by Solomon the wise to the great queen, whereas we had obtained them by theft and sacrilege; and that we had bewitched Eloaz, the governor of the Castle of the Rising Sun, and had caused him to neglect his duty and treat us as honoured guests, instead of making us prisoners and sending us in chains to the city of the queen. Many other crimes were also laid to our charge, and in most of them the animosity of the reader against Eloaz was evident; but I could not but think that there was some reason, which I was unable to fathom, for the so called wise men to permit such monstrous accusations to be made against us without hearing us, the more especially as by our means the kingdom of Saba was being put in possession of the things brought from the tomb of Joash, which, if all was true about the queen of those days and Solomon, should form its choicest treasures.

I answered that we were guiltless of the charges brought against us; and that if the wise men who had sent to make us prisoners had been content to wait and listen to what we had to say, they would have proved their claim to their title more surely than by acting in the arbitrary manner they had; and that we claimed to be permitted to see the queen herself, and to her personally explain who we were, and tell the story of our journey, and our reasons for undertaking it.

Anahac, who had shown great impatience while I was speaking, and several times interrupted me, now spoke

again, saying: "O most excellent Baära, who on account of thy learning and knowledge hast been deputed to examine into the case of these wicked socerers, thou knowest that no man may be brought face to face with the queen's most excellent majesty. I can out of the mouths of men, natives of Saba, who have been slaves in a far land, prove that these men are wizards and magicians; and that they come here for no good purpose may well be known; and I doubt not that their object is to possess themselves of the stone from the signet of Solomon, which is the choicest treasure of Saba, and on which the continuance and prosperity of the kingdom depends."

As he finished, Josa and Benoma were brought forward, and asked questions concerning the time they had been with us, which they answered truly and fairly at first, but after a bit Anahac said that although our passage through the valley of the snakes, and the marvellous means by which we restored dying men to health and strength, and the discovery of the tomb, which though we had endeavoured to keep it from them, they had witnessed, and many other circumstances clearly proved that we were magicians; still the two men were under the influence of our spells, and that without pain, which would cause the evil spirits by whom they were controlled to leave them, the whole truth would never be told by them, and he prayed Baära to permit them to be submitted to torture, in order that they might be enabled to speak the truth.

Baära at once signified his assent, and a frame, on four legs, about ten feet long and six wide, with a rude windlass at one end, was brought in by eight men, whose faces were hidden by masks of zebra hide, and who, save

for a scanty cloth round their loins, were otherwise naked. When they had placed this on the ground, they seized on Josa, and lashing his feet to one end, they made ropes fast round his wrists, which they brought to the windlass at the other; and on a signal from Baära, hove at the windlass until I thought the wretched sufferer would have been dragged asunder. He gave shriek after shriek, until at last the pain became so exquisite that he fainted, on which orders were given for the windlass to be eased up, and the lashings cast off. We were horrified to see, as his senseless body was removed from the rack, that his arms and legs were dislocated, and thought that surely now the cruelty of his torturers must be satisfied; but Anahac spoke to the executioners, and they brought bowls of naphtha, with which they sprinkled him, and then set it on fire. This had the desired effect of restoring him to consciousness, but before he could answer some leading questions which Anahac put to him, the wretched subject of their cruelties expired from the combined effects of the torture and burns.

Anahac said, when he perceived that his victim was dead: "O Baära, thou seest how these men are evil sorcerers, for even now, though prisoners and in chains, they have caused the death of this man, lest he should bear witness against them. Let this be added to the charges against them, and may their punishment be the more severe for having caused an innocent man to die."

"A pretty strong order that," said Hardy, when I translated to him what Anahac had been saying. "See, they are going to torture Benoma now; if they kill him I suppose we shall have caused his death also."

Benoma was now in the hands of the executioners, who secured him to the frame in the same way as they had

Josa; but evidently they were afraid of killing him like his companion, for they did not stretch him to the same extent. Instead they lighted a slow fire under him and let him roast, and when he would not, even under this torture, say what they wanted, they placed hot coals on his eyes; and at last he gave vent to a sound which Anahac and Baära interpreted as an assent to a question as to whether he had not heard us plotting to kill the queen and steal the stone from Solomon's signet, and had been examined by us as to the best means of obtaining access to the queen's person.

The unfortunate man was now cast off, and Anahac ordered his injuries to be attended to, as he would be required as proof against us at "Hiera," as we now heard that the capital was called; and then Anahac, addressing himself to Baära, said: "Thou hast heard how this victim of the strangers who are prisoners in our hands has said that they plotted against the life of the queen and to steal the jewel which is the treasure of the kingdom, what proof further is required of their guilt? That they have cast a spell over Eloaz is evident by his having neglected to fulfil his duties as governor of the Castle of the Rising Sun and guardian of the gate, and treating these strangers who come from whence no man may tell as friends, instead of, as it was meet that he should have done, sending them as prisoners to the wise men, there to be examined as to their wants and intentions."

Baära answered: "It is sufficient; my eyes have seen and my ears have heard. Into thy hands I entrust them till the morrow, when I will depart for Hiera, and they, carefully guarded, shall accompany me."

We were now returned to our dungeon, and an earthen

vessel full of water and some mouldy bread given to us for food ere the door was closed and bolted, and we looked forward to another night of suffocation and discomfort, if it be not too wild a word. The two dogs cowered away in a corner, while we poor human prisoners, unable to lie or sit in comfort, and being so closely chained to each other that the movement of one necessitated the movement of all, arranged ourselves as best we might to obtain some rest. No light was granted to us, or I would have tried to get out my book of numbers, and have endeavoured by their means to obtain some alleviation of our misery.

"What is to be done?" said Hardy. "I hope those devils who sent Baära down have not seized on my brother, if he be the man who is keeper of the lions."

"Can't we manage a light? and then we can study my numbers," I answered.

"A light! how is it to be done? You told us how Trevelyan apparently made light enough when you saw him in the cavern; I wish he would give us a light now."

"Stop, sahib," said Bob; "me get hand out of ring; stone be plenty hard, make spark, see fire come," as, hitting the fetters of his wrist against the granite walls of our prison he brought out a shower of sparks.

"Eh! my masters," said Hamees, as he saw the sparks, "if the Somal will find my bag I will call on Tebaza to come and aid us. This will be the last time, for there is only powder enough in my bag to bring him to me this once."

"Go on," said Hardy.

After much twisting and contriving we managed to get Hamees' pouch off his girdle, and putting the powder on one of the loaves of bread which had been thrown in

for us, we managed, or rather Bob did, after much trouble, to set it on fire.

The smoke filled the whole of our dungeon, and we began to gasp and cough, and it seemed as if Hamees' attempt to obtain assistance was only likely to cause us to die more quickly by suffocation than we otherwise would. I begged Bob to extinguish the fire, but Hamees said, "No, my master; have patience, and Tebaza will come."

Scarcely had he said the words when the smoke began to assume form and substance, and Tebaza appeared before us.

"What are thy commands?" he asked of Hamees. "There are many of the genii who obey the orders of Sheitan who war against thee and thy fellow travellers, but I have hitherto overcome them."

"Boast not of what thou hast done, but give us air to breathe, food to eat, and water to drink, and free us from these bonds," answered Hamees.

"Truly thy commands are light; behold!" And Tebaza, as he spoke, touched a stone in the wall, and it slipped out of its place, admitting a welcome draught of the cool, moist, night air. "But I must blind the eyes of thy guards."

"Nay, Tebaza; with thy help we will leave this place."

"O Hamees, thou canst give me orders; but never will aught prosper with thee if, for the fear of dangers before thee, thou renouncest the quest for that which I, an afrit, cannot mention. Thy guards shall not enter this place when I have caused my breath to pass on them. One moment, and I will return."

Tebaza passed through the wall, and then, in a few moments, reappeared, and saying some words in an un-

known tongue, our dungeon became a spacious chamber. Men appeared who removed our fetters, and carpets and cushions were brought by others, and after our hands and feet had been washed a most sumptuous repast was set before us.

"Never mind the food, Jock," said Hardy; "out with your numbers, and see what you can do for us."

"Forbear for a time," said Tebaza; "I have to undergo a punishment, and a part of it is that the sacred numbers must never be used in my presence. Produce them therefore, and this chamber and these viands pass away, and ye find yourselves again fettered in your dungeon. Eat, drink, and sleep, and all will be well. Ye have five days more to endure, and then your triumph comes."

"The words of Tebaza are good, my master," said Hamees; "do now what he says."

This advice was too pleasant not to follow, and after a most hearty meal, and smoking many pipes of delicious tobacco, we laid down on the cushions and soon slept soundly.

As I slept I dreamed that Trevelyan again appeared to me, and he said: "Do not for the days named by Tebaza use your numbers, for he must watch over you; and if you use them he must withdraw, and the power of your enemies will prevail. On the morning of the fifth day prepare to restore Benoma to health and strength, and then also on that day use the present given you by the Rabbi. Have patience and endure all things; Hardy's brother will be saved as well as you." And having finished speaking he faded away.

Early in the morning Tebaza awoke us all, and I told my dream to my companions, and we determined to be guided by the advice given in it.

The attendants, summoned by Tebaza, again appeared, and we were fed, and our fetters replaced; and then, all vanishing away, we found ourselves again in our dark and dismal dungeon, and in a few moments the doors were opened and our guards entering we were dragged out into the courtyard, and placed on a wagon drawn by eight oxen, to which we were bound by additional chains.

Eloaz we saw in another, with three of those who had seemed to be his most intimate associates among the officers of the garrison, while Baära and Anahac conversed together apart. The whole garrison was drawn up under arms, and an escort of cavalry surrounded the wagons in which we and Eloaz and his companions were placed.

Anahac, suddenly quitting the side of Baära, advanced to where the chief of the executioners who had killed Josa and tortured Benoma the day before was standing, and whispered something to him. The man nodded his head and went away, but soon returned with his assistants, bearing the wretched Benoma among them, who, scarred and burned, was a most pitiable sight to look upon.

As soon as these men had put their burden on the ground, in the centre of the courtyard a horn was sounded, and then Anahac, in a loud voice, said:

"O Baära, and all ye faithful people, ye heard yesterday from the lips of Benoma that the strangers were sorcerers, and plotted to take the life of the queen of Saba and possess themselves of the jewel which is the glory of her kingdom. Benoma has spoken the words of truth, but the spells of the sorcerers may prevail, and he may yet deny what yesterday, after discipline, he said; and as it is better for a man to be dumb than a liar, it is

fitting that his tongue be plucked out, and that he never speaks again. O Baära, is this thy order and decree?"

Baära bowed his head, and said, "It is." And instantly the executioners tore the tongue out of the mouth of the unhappy wretch, and then pitched him into a small cart, which was intended to convey him to Hiera.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BAÄRA now gave the order for us to march, and I was sorry to see that Anahac accompanied the party, the command of the castle being entrusted to one of those who had come with Baära from Hiera.

The carts with the prisoners, surrounded by their escort, went in front, and in rear came Baära in a chariot, and Anahac mounted on a white donkey, while between the two were our animals and baggage.

The road along which we passed was well kept, and on either hand were well-cultivated fields and vineyards; and much to my astonishment I saw here and there groves of olive-trees, whilst we saw houses and cottages scattered about, and every now and then passed through a village, where the whole party was halted, and the population assembled to look upon the sorcerers who had plotted to kill the queen and steal the great jewel.

We noticed that all the women were veiled, and that both they and the men were well and sufficiently clad; but they did not seem to evince any great curiosity or interest about us and our fate, in fact, they seemed like a people who lived under an iron rule, and though wanting for no material comforts, dared not call their lives their own.

From time to time we noticed on either side of the road groves of trees, usually on the summits of hills, among which were buildings, and when the time for us to halt for the night arrived it was at one of these groves that we drew up.

In the centre was a square stone canopy, supported by massive pillars, under which was a stone altar; and in front a golden or gilt image of a bull, on the forehead of which glistened a star of jewels of great beauty; and on either side were houses occupied by the priests who attended to this place of worship; and at the end farther from where we entered was a pyramid nearly a hundred and twenty feet high.

Anahac and Baära called to the priests, and after some consultation with them, we were taken to the pyramid and forced to crawl on our hands, unable to see where we were going, until we arrived in a large chamber, in its centre dimly lighted by a lamp hanging from the top, across which we were hurried into another and smaller one, where we were again confined without light, and only a small quantity of bread and water for food.

In crossing the large chamber I had caught glimpses of a huge human figure on one side, with extended arms, and a horrible stench assailed our nostrils, and even penetrated to the cell where we were confined.

Scarcely had the stone slab which formed the door of our prison been closed when Tebaza appeared, and a repetition of the preceding night's events; and when our fetters had been removed and we had bathed and supped, he said to Hamees, "Now thou and the two mighty men whom thou accompaniest may see and hear what manner of men Baära and Anahac are." And striking the stone door it became to us as transparent as a sheet of glass, though to those in the outer chamber it was opaque, and retained its original appearance.

The central chamber was now brilliantly lighted, and we saw that the figure which I had imperfectly seen was of metal, and now heated to a glowing red; while as-

sembled in the chamber were Baära, Anahac, and a man whom Tebaza said was the priest of the grove, all stripped stark naked, and they were attended by six hideous and deformed beings, whom he told us were deaf and dumb.

In one corner were huddled together a girl of about twelve years old, a boy rather older, and some half dozen newly born children.

"What are the devils going to do now?" said Hardy to me. "There seems to be some infernal cruelty contemplated. Can't we prevent them?"

"Fear not," said Tebaza. "They believe that they have these victims to sacrifice in their infernal rites; but certain of my brethren have taken those they seized on to the city of Nuhas, where they will be in safety, and whence they will be restored to their families when the days of Baära and Anahac are ended; whilst those you see are only their likenesses, and they suffer no pain."

We could not only see what Anahac and his companions were about, but could also hear every word that was said; and now, for the first time, we were able to understand the language of Saba.

Baära commenced speaking to Anahac, and said: "Thou didst well, O Anahac, to acquaint me with the arrival of these strangers, and how Eloaz had treated them as friends. The time is now come when we may take the power of the kingdom of Saba into our hands. Hitherto thou hast known but little of the mysteries of the kingdom, but thou hast always been faithful unto me; and now Beltak, the priest of Amolak, in whose temple we stand, has said how thou hast always provided the victims for the sacrifice, and I will explain unto thee many things which have seemed dark, and admit thee into the secrets of those who, like Beltak and myself,

desire to have power and rule over those spirits who were subject to Solomon the wise, who, when he was visited by the queen of Saba, gave her a stone from his signet which enabled her to call them to her assistance when she needed their help. Know then that on her journey from the sea to Saba she removed the case in which the stone had been inclosed from her neck, and the case with its precious contents was lost.

"She only confided in my ancestor and namesake, Baära the scribe, and it was then agreed that the loss should be kept secret; but when she arrived in Hiera, Baära told the secret to those who had been left to rule the kingdom during the absence of the great queen, and they accused him of having stolen it."

Here Beltak, who had hitherto kept silence, broke in, and said, "Baära, in these matters thou mayest trust all in all, for if thou givest not trust thou wilt not receive service."

"True, O Beltak. The jewel was not lost, but my ancestor, who had loved the queen, but had been repulsed by her, obtained entrance to her tent by night; and what his purpose was is not necessary to our story, but his love had been changed into hate. He stood by the couch of the queen and regarded her marvellous beauty while she slept; when a motion of her arms removed her coverings, and on the pillow he saw lying the case, which he had seen placed in her hands by Solomon the wise, and possessing himself of it stole from her tent without awakening any of her attendants.

"His prize he dared not wear about him, but concealed it in the trappings of his horse, and in the morning he waited to hear what the queen said; but for many days there was nothing said by any person about the loss of the stone, until, anxious to find what the queen thought,

he sought the favour of her handmaid; and the queen, thinking that he had abandoned his desire for her, gave him the handmaid in marriage. From his wife he learned that the queen, hoping that the jewel might be found, had told no one save her of its loss; and in order that its loss might still be concealed, it had been arranged that marriage should make no difference in her relations with the queen, and that no other of the queen's attendants should assist her at the bath and in dressing save only the wife of my ancestor.

"My ancestor, when in possession of the signet, was able, after the queen's arrival in Hiera, to plunge her in a trance, in which she has continued for all these hundreds of years, and counted through its possession in exercising supreme authority in the kingdom of Saba; but his wife, who discovered that he did not love her, stole the jewel from him and fled away, and he was never able to discover what became either of her or it. The governor of the kingdom, who found that for many days the queen did not appear, at last made his way into her chamber; and found that she was plunged in a trance, and on the wall was writing, which had been traced by no mortal hand; and this was to the effect that the jewel had been taken out of the kingdom, and until it was brought back the queen could not be aroused, neither could the gifts of Solomon nor the men he had promised to send to build a temple and a house enter the kingdom.

"The governor summoned the councillors of the kingdom, and the officers who had accompanied the queen, and it was agreed that the loss should be concealed from the people, and trusty emissaries sent to all countries in search of the jewel; but none of these succeeded, and

after many years all ideas of seeking for the jewel were abandoned; and the descendants of the governor of the kingdom, and those who knew of its loss, fearful that if it came back they might lose the power which they exercised, determined that no strangers should enter the kingdom; and they caused the castles and wall to be built and the ditch to be dug which surrounds the country, and no persons have been permitted to come in save slaves until the arrival of these strangers. And now as they bring with them gifts from Solomon for the queen, it is evident that either the jewel has already arrived in the country unknown to us, or else that it is in the possession of these strangers. To maintain our authority it is necessary that we should obtain possession of this jewel, and now we are about to learn how we may attain this.

"Thou must know also that the queen had promised to introduce the religion of Solomon into her dominions; and at first this was done by the council of wise men. But the many restraints imposed by it were irksome, and some of those in her train in the country of the pyramids learned the mysteries and religion of that country; and the worship of the sacred bull and the star was judged to be more fitting for the people, and has become their religion. But a few, among whom was my ancestor, had practised in secret the worship of Amolak, a spirit of great power, and Beltak is one of his priests; and now, by our secret rites and sacrifices, we will invoke his aid in obtaining the jewel and in preventing the waking of the queen, and all power shall be in the hands of the votaries of Amolak. Wilt thou join with us and enjoy power and wealth? If thou refusest, the image of Amolak is heated by the sacred fire, and thou shalt be the first victim that we offer this night."

"O Baära! I have long believed in the power of the dread Amolak, and all my will and all my energies shall be devoted to thy assistance and to his service."

"'Tis well, Beltak; proceed to the sacrifices."

Of the scene of horror and butchery, of the mutilation and roasting alive of the captives, it is no use to write. The horror to us, who knew that the victims were but simulacra of human beings, was appalling, and I cannot even now think of it without a shudder; and to disgust and shock my readers with the recital of the proceedings of the three devils in human form and their loathsome assistants is useless.

Tebaza said, as they cut themselves and shrieked for Amolak to appear: "They may call, but Amolak cannot come where the stone from the signet of the mighty Solomon is; and that is here, but where I may not say, but one of my brethren will take his semblance and betray these people to their perdition."

Even as he spoke a dark cloud appeared in the midst of the chamber, and from its midst came a voice, saying, "What would my votaries of Amolak, that they have called upon me by these secret rites?"

"We would the possession of the——"

"Name it not. If ye name it in my presence I will rend you in pieces; but I know what ye want. When ye arrive at Hiera, Baära and Anahak, enter into the palace of the queen, and say unto the wise men that the stone is found, that ye hold it, and then they will obey you; and choose a maiden, and bring her forth before the people that she is queen, and let her decree that the worship of Amolak is to be followed in all Saba, and that these strangers be the first victims to be sacrificed, for none but a maid can do aught against them. In the

ashes of their bodies the jewel will be found, for the one who speaks hath swallowed it; and then ye will have power and command and can fulfil all that your hearts desire."

"O Amolak! thy command shall be obeyed."

The form melted away, and the three conspirators soon after quitted the chamber.

"I cannot say that Amolak was very clear in his advice," said Hardy.

"Nay," said Tebaza; "but to wicked men few words are sufficient to induce them to do evil."

"But this stone," I asked, "where is it?"

"In thy possession, given to thee by the Rabbi in the town of Aden. Thou mayest not use it till the destined moment arrives; but the time approaches when thou mayest open the case, when these wicked men will be discomfited, and the queen will awake. But now seek repose, thou and thy companions, for the journey is long, and many trials have still to be endured before all is accomplished."

"This moment, most useful of genii," said Hardy: "but can't you give me some news of my brother? Is he the keeper of the lions, of whom Eloaz spoke?"

"'Tis he, and though he is in danger, no harm has happened to him; and as far as it is permitted to me to foretell the future, you will embrace him in safety ere many days be past."

"Then I will hope for the best," said Hardy; "and now as it is late we had best get to sleep in comfort, for that wagon jolts most confoundedly, and what with that and our chains, I find myself sore and stiff."

Next morning our journey was resumed under the same conditions as before, and I was astonished to see how

highly civilized the people of the villages we passed through appeared to be, and how well cultivated and populous the country was. Each night we halted at large villages, built near groves, and were confined sometimes in houses in the villages and sometimes in buildings in these groves, and each night we were released from our chains in the same manner as before, but Tebaza himself did not appear until the night before our arrival at Hiera.

This night the place selected for our prison was a cavern, hewn in a cliff of sandstone and closed at the entrance by a wooden door, barred with iron, but more spacious than any place that we had been placed in since leaving the Castle of the Rising Sun on the frontier. As soon as the doors were closed, Tebaza appeared, and when we were freed from our chains, he said to me: "I will now admit you to a place where I may not enter, but thy friends must remain without; for it is only permitted to those who for some wise purpose are selected to be endowed with the knowledge and power which will fall to thy lot to enter into the place where to-night you will be. You will have to resist the demon Amolak."

So saying, he struck the side of the cavern, and the solid rock opened, and disclosed an arched passage, lighted by crystal lamps, similar to that which I had seen in the tomb of Joash.

"Enter, trusting in the power of the Architect of the universe, and fear not," said Tebaza. And as I stepped into the passage the rocks closed behind me, and I was alone.

I went on for some distance without anything occurring, and wondering much what fresh, strange thing was to happen to me, though all idea of astonishment at

whatever might chance to me had by the events of our journey been quite removed from my mind. I seemed to have left the nineteenth century and all its scepticisms and unbeliefs, and for all practical purposes to be in another planet; but, mindful of the last words of Tebaza, I pressed on without fear.

After some time the passage began to widen out, and its roof to become more lofty, while in niches on either hand were statues in the semblance of animals of which I had never dreamed. Suddenly, as I was thinking that surely I must be coming to the end of my lonely path, I saw a wave of fire rolling towards me, and looking round saw that all behind me were also masses of flames, which would have barred my return had I attempted to retrace my steps.

"Fear not," I said to myself, and breathing a prayer, and grasping the case containing the stone from Solomon's signet, I pressed forward, and found that the waves of fire retreated as I approached them, and I heard a voice saying, "Thou hast passed the first test; be brave, and fear not."

As the voice died away a sound arose as of the clanging of innumerable hammers on plates of iron, and the statues became endued with life, and in all their monstrous reality surrounded me, and with claw, jaw, and scaly tail, with talon and fang, threatened to hinder my going forward. Out of their nostrils and mouths they poured forth sulphurous fumes, and as I held myself from them and still pressed forward I found that they were powerless to hinder me; but their numbers kept on increasing, and as some retired in impotent rage, others replaced them, to be foiled in their turn.

A voice was now heard: "What! my trusty guar-

dians, will ye permit a mortal to pass where none before have trodden, and the power of your master Amolak to be rent from him? Seize the audacious intruder and rend him in pieces!"

And as they again surged round me and again retired powerless, "What! ye cannot prevail against him! It is then time that Amolak himself chastises the puny mortal who would pass by him to the chamber of knowledge and power!"

As I heard this I saw before me a dark and inform mass, whence the same voice said to me: "Retire whence thou comest; though thou hast foiled my trusty beasts, 'tis Amolak who speaks, and he will cause thee to die a death more horrible and painful than the heart of man may conceive."

I held my own and stepped forward, still grasping my talisman, when the voice again spoke:

"What! wouldest thou fain mortal power, riches, safety, the destruction of thine enemies, Baära, Beltak, and Anahac? Freely I give them to thee to wreak thy vengeance to the uttermost on their souls and bodies. Thou hast not quailed, and Amolak loves a brave man: all thou hast seen is but a proof; render me the casket thou holdest, do me homage, and the command of the world is thine."

"Foul fiend, avaunt!" I replied. "I am in darkness and alone, but I defy thee; not to one who is worshipped by cruel and bloody murderers will I bend the knee in worship. I will on!"

"Thou defiest me! Then meet thy fate!"

As he spoke there seemed to be successive shocks of a most tremendous earthquake; the roofs and walls cracked and fell, and flows of fiery lava surrounded me on

every side; but still, trusting in the All-wise, I blanched not, nor withdrew one step backwards: no, I pressed on, and though masses of rock of many tons' weight fell around me, none harmed or crushed, and even as my foot seemed about to be planted in the molten, glowing lava, it retreated before me.

I felt that mortal frame could not for long stand the tension of mind and nerve to which I was subjected: when all at once the earthquake shocks ceased and the lava disappeared, and the noise and turmoil by which I had been surrounded died away, and was succeeded by a perfect stillness.

Around me lay the ruins of the passage, and the demoniac forms which had assailed me had all returned to their niches and resumed the appearance and immobility of stone.

A voice of surpassing sweetness now said, "Thou hast successfully defied Amolak, and now all is smooth before thee." And as it ceased I found myself again among my companions, who were slumbering peacefully; and casting myself on a vacant couch, I was soon in a sound and dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER XXIV.

NEXT morning when I awoke Hardy asked me about my night's adventures, and when I told him of what had occurred, he said, "Everything seems more and more strange, but you must have felt very curious at times."

"Certainly," I replied, "my sensations were peculiar; but I felt sustained by a faith that I should pass safely through it all, and now I am certain that we shall also pass safely through all that is before us, and that to-day will be the crisis of our fate. But what is this? I feel the case which the Rabbi gave me is opening?" And hurriedly undoing my jacket and shirt, I found the case, which hitherto it had to all appearance been impossible to open, was now half unclosed; and as I took it in my hand the lid lifted right up, and we saw inside a piece of parchment, on which was written, "The gift of Solomon to the queen of Sheba," and a large table diamond, on which was engraved the most sacred name of the Almighty; and on turning the parchment over I found written on the other side, "This stone is a symbol of power over the genii: use it wisely and use it well, and thou shalt prosper; use it for evil, and though for a time thou mayest seem to prosper, in the end thou wilt be punished eternally. This is a sacred trust, use it with prayer and trembling."

"That's a great trust," said Hardy. But our further conversation was cut short by the appearance of Tebaza and another afrit, who both prostrated themselves before

me; and Tebaza said, "Mighty lord, this is the chief of the afrits and governor of the city of Nuhas, and he comes to offer his homage to the possessor of the seal of Solomon."

His companion then said, "My name is Eltuf, mighty lord and master: 'tis for thee to command, and for me and mine to obey. Say the word, and all the inhabitants of Nuhas are at thy beck and call."

"Shall we free ourselves at once," I said to Hardy, "and take Baära and Anahac into Hiera as prisoners, instead of our going there as their captives?"

"No; we will let their plot develop itself. But I think, as you have been dreaming and having visions about Trevelyan, that it would be well for him to be present with us at the end; and as I believe genii can annihilate space and distance, as we understand them, tell them to bring Trevelyan to us when we are in Hiera."

"Certainly." And I gave orders to Eltuf accordingly, who said, "Belama, come." And a winged afrit of gigantic size appeared, to whom he said: "The lord and master commands the presence of his friend named Trevelyan: where'er he be, present thyself before him, and inform him of the master's wishes, and at such moment as the master calls for him place him safely by his side."

Eltuf and Tebaza promised that, though invisible, they would watch by us, and be ready to assist us any moment, and guard us from physical injury.

It was now time for the day's march to begin, and, our chains having been replaced, and our dungeon restored to its normal condition, we heard the doors being unbarred, and the voice of Anahac ordering us to be brought forth.

Instead of the wagon in which we had hitherto

travelled we were now placed on a high platform, which had been erected in one, where we could be seen by all the people round about. Eloaz and Benoma were still in the carts in which they had been brought from the Castle of the Rising Sun; but a number of horsemen had arrived from Hiera, and the escort was more than doubled, and we could see Baära and Anahac in consultation with several men, who by their dress and bearing were evidently persons in authority.

The order of march was soon formed, we being placed in the van, surrounded by a troop of forty men, mounted on coal-black steeds, and being immediately followed by Eloaz and Benoma, after whom came our horses and baggage; and after them Baära and Anahac and several of the new arrivals, all mounted in chariots and attended by horsemen.

We soon, from our elevated position, saw the signs of our approaching a large city: villages were more numerous, and we could see many paths and roads leading in the same direction as the one we were following, and along all of them we could see groups of people hurrying towards the city. At last, on arriving at the summit of a hill, we caught sight of the city of Hiera, lying in the centre of a plain in front of us. All around were suburbs composed of well-built houses, with trees and gardens around them; but the city itself was of comparatively small extent, and was surrounded by high, battlemented walls, pierced, as we afterwards found, by sixteen gates.

Inside the city the houses were not so many as we expected; for in one part there was a large open space, on which we could see neither man nor beast, whilst another portion was occupied by gardens, in which rose three large buildings, which were the palace of the queen, the

principal temple, and a hall of council, all stately buildings with columned fronts.

We descended the hill towards the city at a quicker pace than we had hitherto been travelling, and at half a mile from the gate by which we were to enter were met by a herald and trumpeters, who ordered us to halt, and called for Baära to give an account of his mission.

Baära and those with him quitted their chariots, and advanced and spoke with the herald for some minutes, who then placed himself at the head of the procession, and gave the order for us to proceed.

When we arrived close to the gate, we could see that it was closed, and the herald advancing cried out:

"Open the gate, and permit the noble Baära to enter, bringing with him the strangers who have entered the kingdom of Saba, who are sorcerers and magicians, and had the intention of killing the mighty queen, and possessing themselves of the jewel, the source of the glory and power of Saba—their machinations have been foiled by the wisdom and vigilance of Anahac the scribe—and Eloaz; and they will now suffer the penalty of their wickedness in the city of Hiera."

The gates slowly opened, and gave entrance to us and to our escort, and all the people who were accompanying us. And we passed through the streets of flat-topped houses, whose roofs were crowded with spectators, eager to catch a glimpse of our persons; but not a sound escaped from them, all being hushed so that the accusation against us, which was repeated from time to time by the herald, might be distinctly heard.

At last we reached the open space of which mention has been made above, and here we saw were collected vast quantities of hewn stone and timber, as if in readi-

ness for the erection of some vast building, and crossing it entered the gardens and halted in front of a building, somewhat like one of the temples of ancient Egypt, and were made to descend from our platform and enter in.

The inside was one vast chamber, the roof of which was supported by heavy columns, and at one end was a platform, on which were seated seven old men, in flowing white robes, whilst before them knelt on the ground a number of scribes.

We were now only guarded by a small number of men, and were followed into the building by Baära, Anahac, and many of those whom we had seen speaking to him in the morning; and we were surprised to see that Beltak, the priest, who we believed had remained behind at the place where we had witnessed the adoration of Amolak, was with them.

Baära approached the platform, and prostrating himself, waited till one of the old men told him to arise and speak.

Baära now rose up, and said: "O men of wisdom, through whom the decrees of the queen are made known to her subjects, ye know how Anahac the scribe wrote to inform you of the arrival of certain sorcerers at the Castle of the Rising Sun, who by magic had overcome the difficulties of their way, and by their spells had induced Eloaz, the guardian of the gate, to neglect his duties, and, instead of sending them bound and prisoners to Hiera, that ye in your wisdom might inform the queen what was the fitting punishment for them and their crimes, treated them as honoured guests. Anahac found that they had possessed themselves in some mysterious manner of two of the people of Saba, and through their assistance had passed the valley of snakes, the fiery

marsh, the dragons of the falling water, and the country of the dwarfs, and had even made the king of the snakes and three of the dwarfs prisoners. Over the two men of Saba they had obtained complete mastery, and one by spells they killed rather than that he should witness against them, but the other has confessed that he heard them plot to kill the queen and steal the jewel, the glory of the kingdom. I pray that sentence may be given that they may be burned alive, and that as this is a case of grave import, that the queen herself appear to pronounce their sentence, and that he who was keeper of the lions, and who is their brother, suffer with him. I have spoken, may ye decide wisely!"

Beltak now approached and said: "The religion and safety of Saba are in peril if these men live, and after much fasting and prayer it has been revealed to me that unless these men suffer as Baära hath said, ruin and disaster await us, and as a priest entrusted with the sacred mysteries, I pray that the queen may appear to pronounce their sentence."

"The queen, but——" said the chief of the old men.

Beltak broke in: "I know what thou wouldest say, that it is not according to the customs of Saba for the queen ever to appear, but I have reasons for the ears of the council alone why this request be granted. I pray thee and thy fellows that they give commands for all to leave the building, save themselves, Baära, Anahac, and thy slave who addresses thee, and it will be seen that my advice is good."

Orders were given accordingly, and we were taken away to the palace, a building somewhat similar in external appearance to the one we quitted, but divided into many rooms and chambers; and here we were thrust

into a small room, lined with slabs of granite, close by the entrance, and the door closed on us.

Tebaza and Eltuf at once appeared, and when we had been freed from our chains, Belama appeared, bringing Trevelyan with him.

Trevelyan said: "I know all that has happened to you. My own adventures are no less wonderful and astonishing, but I cannot tell you what has happened to me, for now is the time for action. Murray, the key you obtained at Doeru, where is it now?"

"Here, sewn in my shirt," I said.

Quickly cutting it out, and going to one of the slabs of stone, he showed me a keyhole which the key fitted, and when I put it in, the slab turned back smoothly and quietly, and we saw a long corridor leading towards the interior of the palace.

"Come with me, all three of you; Eltuf, you watch the proceedings of the old men and Baära, they are conspiring to do evil. Belama, bring the brother of my friend, the keeper of the lions, to this chamber, he is in danger of death; the people love him for his bravery, and it is feared that they would not consent to his death as to that of strangers, and he will be murdered in secret. Tebaza, you cannot enter here: have a care that the guards enter not the closed doors of the palace."

Much wondering at Trevelyan's evident knowledge of all that had happened, I was about to follow him, when the condition of the unfortunate Benoma flashed upon my mind, and I spoke to Trevelyan about him.

"Certainly, finish the combination. Belama, why loiterest thou? Bring hither also Eloaz and Benoma. Now forward."

With Trevelyan, Hamees, Hardy, and myself, leaving

Bob with the two dogs, entered the corridor; and after passing along it for some distance we came to a door, thickly barred and studded with silver, which the golden key also opened, and passing through it we entered a circular chamber, lighted by a golden lamp hanging from the roof, where we found a guard of gigantic negroes, armed with silver battle-axes, with hats of ivory, and dressed in crimson silk, with circlets of gold round their necks, wrists, and ankles, but who were all apparently plunged in the deepest slumber and never moved as we entered. Passing by them, Trevelyan drew aside heavy curtains of wool, dyed scarlet, and disclosed another door, which opened of itself, and gave access to a large hall, where we saw seated a number of old men in white robes, with scrolls of writing before them, and attendants standing about in various positions, but all still and motionless, as if they had been suddenly smitten with deep sleep while engaged in whatever their employment might have been. Going to one of the motionless figures, Trevelyan took from his hand a scroll of parchment, which he handed to me, and signed that I should read it.

It proved to be a draft of a letter from the queen to Solomon, informing him of the loss of the stone from his ring, and begging of him to save the queen from any misfortune which might happen to her from its loss or theft, but was unfinished, and evidently had formed the subject of the discussion when the trance in which all were plunged had fallen upon them.

"You see," said Trevelyan, "that the queen had decided to apply to Solomon, and these men, councillors of the queen's palace, were ordered to write a letter which she might sign; but the ancestor of Baära plunged her and all her attendants into this trance, and by the aid of

Amolak and the evil spirits who obey his commands, he and his descendants have exercised the principal authority in the kingdom of Saba ever since, and have pretended that the queen had received letters from Solomon telling her never to appear before the people, and from time to time they have announced the death of one queen and the accession of another, but really they have oppressed the people most horribly. The religion which the queen, acting under the instruction of Solomon, instituted in the country has been abandoned, and the worship of the golden calf substituted; but in private, Baära and those who with him have known the truth have worshipped Amolak with bloody rites."

"How, if this is the case, did I see the banner with three names? and how is it that Eloaz told me all the officers of the kingdom were initiated into the first degree of masonry?"

"The names and symbols have been retained, but to the vulgar they are only applicable to the worship of the calf, and though it has been considered necessary for all who enter into the service of the state to become members of the masonic body, it has been the custom only to permit sons of masons to join, and therefore the public service has become hereditary. The holders of the guilty secret of the trance of the queen and the loss of the stone have thus a limited class to deal with in appointing governors to the provinces and castles, and as they exercise a pure despotism, claiming to do all by virtue of edicts under the queen's hand, and from time to time for real or pretended offences punishing their subordinates with fearful severity, they maintain them in a state of absolute subjection. But now, beyond this hall, lie the queen's chambers; enter and place the jewel

around the queen's neck, and she will awake, and then place in her hands the letter you have brought from the tomb of Joash. I and your companions will await you here."

I passed through another door, and found myself in the hall of audience of the palace. In the centre was a throne, formed of golden peacocks, whose plumage was imitated in precious stones, and approached by a flight of nine steps, on each of which were golden lions, and above all, supported on poles of ebony and ivory, braced with gold, a canopy of needlework. Around the throne were standing women, beautiful in form and feature, and arrayed in robes of great magnificence, but the surpassing beauty and majesty of the occupant of the throne so entranced me that I could scarce cast a glance at her attendants.

All was hushed and still, and I could almost hear the beating of my heart as I approached across the floor, which was formed of polished steel, and mirrored all the beauty of the roof and walls, which were carved and inlaid with mother-of-pearl and costly woods.

I advanced slowly towards the throne, and ascending the steps I, wondering at my temerity as I did so, clasped the chain of the case around the neck of the queen.

She awoke with a start, and instantly all her attendants became endued with life.

I sank on my knee, and waited for the queen to speak. "What is this?" she said. "Who art thou, audacious stranger, who comest here unannounced and unattended? Call my councillors, that I may learn how my guards have been passed, and a man strange in mien and garments has entered the sacred hall of audience."

"Hold one moment, I pray your majesty. I have been so favoured by Providence as to be permitted to replace the jewel given unto thee by Solomon the king, and which was stolen from thee by the guilty Baära; and this letter, which I give into thy hands, was written by the envoy of Solomon, who died on his road hither, and whose task I am allowed to fulfil."

"Strange! But now I remember, and 'twas Baära stole the stone; but I have slumbered."

"Your majesty has been by Baära plunged in a trance, which has endured many hundreds of years; but now thou art awoke all is well. Instant action is necessary, as even now a descendant of Baära is plotting to regain the jewel which I have returned to thee. With it thou hast thy power over the afrits restored."

As I spoke, the old men whom I had seen in the chamber outside entered, accompanied by Trevelyan, Hardy, and Hamees, and in as few words as possible the whole situation was explained. "Summon my guards and attendants," said the queen. "I will go forth, and say unto the people that Baära, Beltak, and Anahac are guilty monsters." All the palace, which was previously as silent as a tomb, was now full of life and motion; and the queen, descending from her throne, proceeded from the hall of audience, where I had found her, through spacious rooms and chambers, to the grand entrance.

Here we found drawn up a body of men, armed with helmets of gold and shields of silver, and gorgeously dressed in scarlet and white; and the queen giving the order, six trumpeters stepped forth from among them, and sounded a long call.

From this entrance we could see that people were clustered round the hall of council, and that from its

portals a procession was issuing, and coming towards the palace. Borne high on the shoulders of men we could descry a crowned female figure, and loud cries from the people hailed her as the queen.

The sound of the palace trumpets evidently caused surprise and dismay among those forming the procession; notwithstanding we could see Baära and Beltak urging the people to proceed, it presently came to a full stop.

A herald was now sent out by the real queen, who ordered all to come to hear her speak from the steps of the palace, and the crowds who had been cheering her substitute brought forth by Baära now came pouring towards the palace.

As soon as they set eyes on the queen there went up a mighty shout of homage and acclamation, and cries of "We have been deceived. This is indeed the queen! Baära has lied! Let us rend him in pieces! Where is he? Prevent his escape!" And unless the queen had ordered her guards to seize on Baära and his co-conspirators, there is little doubt that they would have been torn to pieces by the excited mob. As it was, their unfortunate puppet, the girl they had brought forward as queen, was slain by a stone slung by some one in the crowd at Anahac, who was seeking safety by trying to conceal himself beneath the litter on which the false queen had been carried.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE queen gave orders for the prisoners to be confined in one of the dungeons of the palace, and then ordering her councillors to look to public order, and to announce that on the morrow she would again appear to her subjects, retired into the private apartments of the palace, whither we accompanied her, and where she summoned the genii Eltuf and Tebaza, and commanded that they should summon their legions and capture the demon Amolak. Eloaz, Benoma, and Hardy's brother Hugh were also brought by Belama into this part of the palace, and the meeting of the two brothers under such strange circumstances, and after both had been through so many and such strange adventures, was affecting in the extreme; for although they did not kiss and embrace as men of a more impulsive nationality might have done, there was more of heartfelt emotion in their handgrip than in any of the kisses and huggings indulged in by the Latin races.

The queen had to be informed of much of our journey, the discovery of the tomb of Joash and its contents, and also of the pillar left at Doeru; and by Eloaz, whom she restored to his position as guardian of the Gate of the Rising Sun, of the condition of the people, and of the tyranny exercised over them by Baära and his companions in guilt, and of the bloody tax they had to pay in supplying victims for the worship of Amolak.

"And has this come of my desire for wisdom and power,

and to be the rival of the great king Solomon? One thing must be done at once: the temples of Amolak must be destroyed, and the groves and golden calves cast down, and the religion of one God, as taught me by Solomon, established in the land."

Trevelyan, when she said this, stepped out and said, "Your majesty, the religion of Solomon has changed." And he briefly set out the occurrences of the commencement of the Christian era, and the changes consequent thereon.

"More change and more bewilderment. I would that I had remained entranced, or that I had died in the time when by nature's laws I should!"

"Hold, your majesty!" he replied; "it is not for long that this will continue. Think not that you can endure for ever; you have a task to fulfil, and then you will pass away in peace."

Our conference was now interrupted by the entrance of Eltuf, followed by two afrits, who bore a huge casket formed of crystal, in which they had, after a severe struggle, imprisoned Amolak, and which they begged the queen to seal with the seal of Solomon, so that he might never escape to trouble human beings; and this being done, Eltuf ordered them to cast the casket into the sea of fire in the country surrounding the city of Nuhas.

Baära, Beltak, and Anahac, it was now reported, had managed to commit suicide in their prison, and their trial, which the queen had intended to hold in public the next day, could not therefore take place; but she caused proclamations to be written and sent out to all portions of the kingdom, setting forth their guilt, and ordering the frontiers of the kingdom to be thrown open, and

people to be permitted to enter and leave the country as they listed, when engaged in peaceful pursuits.

At last we quitted her, and went to rooms which had been prepared for us, and here we were told the stories of Trevelyan and Hugh Hardy. Trevelyan's adventures had been perhaps even more marvellous than our own; but the time is not yet arrived to narrate them to the world, and I must not therefore now divulge what he then told us, though perhaps soon it may be related by himself.

Hugh Hardy's narrative was one of hardship, privation, and cruelty. When the ship was wrecked, he, with five others, managed to get to shore on a raft; but soon one of his companions died, and he and the rest were made prisoners by the Somâlis, who employed them to herd cattle, collect firewood, and perform all kinds of menial offices. Scantily clothed, badly fed, often suffering from fever and illness, their little party dwindled down to two, when, after having passed through many hands, they and their masters were captured by a party of Gallas. This change was for the worse if anything, and at last Hugh's only companion died, and he was left alone a slave in a strange country, and without any hope of ever seeing his home again. At last he had passed into the hands of the people of Saba, and had been sent as a present to a person residing in Hiera, who gave him to the master of the lions. The master of the lions had twice made him fight with a lion for the amusement of the people, and having been successful, and slain his antagonist in each encounter, he was told he would have to fight no more, but would be employed in feeding the lions and cleaning out their dens, which, he said, was scarcely less dangerous than meeting them in the arena. At last, as we had

been told, he killed a lion which had escaped, and from which his master had fled, and for this service he was put in his master's place.

As keeper of the lions he had lived happily and comfortably, and had, two years before our arrival, married a beautiful girl, by whom he had one child, a son. As he finished, he said: "I scarce know if I would care to return to England; all would be strange to me, and my wife would not understand it."

"No, my brother," said Tom Hardy; "you must come back. Your wife, if she is beautiful here, would be a wonder in England, and your boy is heir to the old place. I have had it kept in order, but have only spent on myself since our father's death my mother's money. You are a rich man now, Hugh; go back to England and enjoy it."

Hugh for a long time stood out, but at last the pleading of his brother prevailed, and he consented to return; and sending for his wife and child he presented them to us. He had spoken of his wife as a beauty, but, except the queen, I have never seen any woman who could approach her in that respect, and the child was a fine baby of six months old. I was sure that the wife would be remarkable anywhere, and that Hugh Hardy would never have to blush because in his land of exile he had taken a wife, a daughter of the country in which his dreary lot was cast.

It was long before we had exchanged notes of all our experiences, and when it was over we found that it was getting late; so Hugh Hardy proposed that before it got quite dark we should walk round the town and see the lions—both the living ones, of which he was the keeper, and also the buildings and other sights worthy of notice.

"Certainly," said his brother; "let us get the dogs and see our horses and baggage. I wonder how Sheikh and Askar have fared while we have been prisoners."

We accordingly went to the room where the dogs had been left, and found that they and Bob had been well looked after by Benoma, who, restored to health and strength, was strong in his denunciations of Baara and Anahac; and when told they were dead, lamented that he had not had an opportunity of repaying them the agonies they had caused him to suffer. Sheikh and Askar we found carefully fed and stabled, and they neighed and whinnied with delight when they recognised the voices of Hardy and myself and saw their old friends the dogs.

We stopped so long petting and fondling them that at last Hugh Hardy said we must put off visiting the lions till the morning, and took us to his own house to pass the night. Just as we were about to enter the door, a man closely muffled up passed by us, and Havana, who was following close at my heels, sprang on him and brought him to the ground. I rushed to drag the dog off, and was astonished to find that his captive was the very Anahac whom a short time before we had been told had committed suicide.

"Hallo! there's some treachery here," I said, and with the assistance of my companions, secured him and took him back to the palace dungeons, where, after some trouble, we found that Baära and Beltak were indeed dead, but that Anahac had managed to bribe one of the gaolers to permit him to escape, and the corpse of a man who had died during the day having been substituted for him he would have got away if Havana had not detected him when he passed us.

Trevelyan at once asked for an audience of the queen,

to report the attempted flight and capture of Anahac. The queen said that in the morning she would pronounce sentence on him and thanked us for our vigilance.

Early in the morning the palace trumpets summoned all the people to assemble in the large open space through which we had passed on entering the town; and at ten o'clock she came there in state herself, surrounded by her women and guards, and having taken her seat on a temporary throne which had been erected for her, received the homage of her people, who, having been taught that the queen was never to be seen by them, were rejoiced and astonished at her beauty and grace, and also at seeing her among them.

It was some time before silence was obtained, but at last all were quiet, and the queen, rising from her throne, said: "Subjects, for many long years ye have been oppressed by wicked men, who have usurped my authority, and, robbing you of your children, have offered them to Amolak the demon, to obtain his assistance in their evil doings. Two of these men, Baära and Beltak, have escaped from justice by killing themselves, but a third, Anahac, is here, and his doom is that he be thrown to the lions. Others who assisted them and usurped the functions of my advisers will be sent as prisoners to the country of the mines, there to labour until their lives' end."

Anahac was at once led away; but Hugh Hardy, who as keeper of the lions should have superintended the sentence, advanced to the foot of the throne, and said: "The man is worthy of death and punishment, but mercy is more noble than revenge. Anahac is powerless to harm thee or thine, most gracious sovereign; change his doom to lifelong labour in the mines."

The queen was graciously pleased to assent, and he

and the other prisoners were made over to Benoma, who, in consideration of his many sufferings, was made superintendent of the royal mines, and ordered at once to start for his post.

The three dwarfs were now brought before the queen, and being addressed by an interpreter, were told that they were free, but that if they, or any of their tribe, ever attacked travellers on their way to Saba they would all be swept from the face of the earth. The king of the snakes, who was brought out in his cage, was entrusted to Eltuf, who was present in the likeness of a slave, and he was commanded to convey him to the place where he had been captured and there set him at liberty; but his golden collar was taken from him, to be kept as a pledge of his good behaviour.

The articles we had brought from the tomb of Joash were now conveyed into the hall of council, and the queen being present, were opened, when it was found that the plans and documents related to the building of a temple on the model of that at Jerusalem, for which the stone and wood which we had seen piled around the square were prepared.

Trevelyan now spoke to the queen, and told her more of the changes that had taken place during her trance; and she said she could never understand it all, and that she would prefer to quit this world to living and ruling under such altered circumstances.

Trevelyan answered that it was in her power, for she had but to remove the talisman from her neck, when the hand of time, which had been stayed for all these centuries, would have effect, and her attendants and herself would pass away, and the palace, temple, and hall of council would crumble into ruins.

"It is well," she said; "but to whom is the rule of the kingdom to be entrusted?"

Trevelyan said: "Make a proclamation that Eloaz is to rule over the kingdom, and that in three days' time thy reign will finish. Send this proclamation to all parts of thy kingdom, and let Eloaz rule over the people of Saba by means of justice and mercy, and not relying on supernatural powers."

"Thy words are wise," said the queen; "let it be even so."

The proclamation was soon drawn up, and the queen, returning to the open space, the people were summoned to hear it read, which was listened to with silence; and then Eloaz, standing on the steps of the throne, swore to rule with justice and mercy.

Three days afterwards the queen took the case from off her neck and handed it to me, and instantly she and all the sharers of her trance vanished from off the face of the earth, and palace, temple, and hall of audience crumbled into dust.

I summoned Eltuf, and soon Trevelyan, the two Hardys, myself, and Hamees, together with Bob and our horses and dogs, and all we had found in the tomb of Joash, were carried to Ras Hafûn, off which place the *Gulnare* was riding at anchor. We were soon on board and on our way home.

The things from the tomb of Joash have been delivered to the sage Amasis at Cairo, and we are all now studying with the Rabbi, who has joined us there, how the marvellous powers of which we are possessed may be best used for the benefit of mankind.

Hugh Hardy alone of all our party has not joined in our search for knowledge, but with his wife and child are

settled in old England, where her beauty and grace excite universal admiration. Till now we have said nothing of these adventures, but the time is drawing close when for England and the world it will be necessary for us to use the power and knowledge which we gained during our visit to

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